

The sub-national level and the transfer of employment policies and practices in multinationals: Case study evidence from Belgium

Vickie DEKOCKER

Proefschrift aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de
graad van Doctor in de Sociale Wetenschappen

Promotor: Prof. Dr. Valéria Pulignano
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Table of Content

Table of Content.....	1
A word of thanks	6
List of abbreviations	8
List of tables	9
List of figures	10
Introduction	11
0.1 The context.....	12
0.2 What is the research question?	15
0.3 How has the research question been answered?	16
0.4 Why is this question relevant?.....	20
0.5 What do the research results tell us?	22
Part I: Literature review	25
Chapter I: State of the Art	26
1.1 Introduction	27
1.2 The transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs	27
1.2.1 Defining the transfer.....	27
1.2.2 Defining the transfer of employment policies and practices	31
1.2.3 Defining the transfer of employment policies and practices in multinational companies	32
1.3 Explaining the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs: Theoretical approaches	33
1.3.1 Pressure for convergence and global integration.....	33
1.3.2 Pressure for divergence and local adaptation	35
1.4 Explaining the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs: Gaps in knowledge ...	38
1.5 Filling the gaps: research focus	41
1.6 Filling the gap (1): what are the relevant employment policies at multiple sub-national levels for the study on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs	43
1.6.1 Defining employment policies at sub-national levels.....	43
1.6.2 Changing employment policies at sub-national levels	45
1.7 Filling the gap (2): the role of social actors.....	46
1.7.1 How social actors are expected to shape employment policies at sub-national levels	46

1.7.2 How employment policies at sub-national levels are expected to affect the transfer within MNCs	49
Chapter II: The research context	52
2.1 Introduction	53
2.2 Pay and training policies and practices	53
2.2.1 Pay policies and practices.....	54
2.2.2 Training policies and practices.....	55
2.3 Articulating between institutions and local actors at different levels.....	56
2.4 The Belgian institutional setting: the presence of resources	57
2.4.1 Resources at the level of regional governments-skill and training system.....	57
2.4.2 Resources at the inter-firm level-sphere of the state/(skill and training system).....	59
2.4.3 Resources at the inter-firm level-financial sphere-sphere of the state.....	59
2.4.4 Resources at the company level-sphere of the state	61
2.5 Conclusion.....	62
Part II: Methodology	65
Chapter III: Research Set-Up	66
3.1 Introduction	67
3.2 The choice for qualitative case study research	67
3.3 Selecting MNCs to study employment policies at sub-national levels and the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries	69
3.3.1 Constructing a representative MNC population for the study on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in Belgium	71
3.3.2 From three secondary datasets to a representative list of MNCs in Belgium.....	72
3.3.3 Problems and pitfalls when using secondary datasets	76
3.4 Case selection.....	78
3.5 Data collection process.....	80
3.5.1 What has been examined?	80
3.5.2 Who has been approached?	82
3.5.3 How the data have been collected?.....	86
Chapter IV: Analysis and reflection.....	91
4.1 Introduction	92
4.2 Data management and analysis	92
4.3 Methodological reflection	94
4.3.1 Reliability	94
4.3.2 Validity	96
4.3.3 Final reflections on methodology	99

Chapter V: Case description	102
5.1 Introduction	103
5.2 Waste	103
5.2.1 Background characteristics of Waste worldwide: no formal management structure	103
5.2.2 Background characteristics of Waste in Belgium: collection of former SME's.....	104
5.2.3 Employment policies at sub-national levels: full package	106
5.2.4 Transfer: no formal employment policy	107
5.3 Food.....	108
5.3.1 Background characteristics of Food worldwide: open structure with dominant business division	108
5.3.2 Background characteristics of Food in Belgium: Belgian headquarters of four business divisions.....	109
5.3.3 Employment policies at sub-national levels: full package	112
5.3.4 Transfer: controlled discretion	113
5.4 Packaging	115
5.4.1 Background characteristics of Packaging worldwide: structure based on centralised business divisions.....	115
5.4.2 Background characteristics of Packaging in Belgium: strongly differing subsidiaries	115
5.4.3 Employment policies at sub-national levels: limited presence of employment policies at the sector level.....	117
5.4.4 Transfer: centralisation with limited space for manoeuvre	118
5.5 ICT	118
5.5.1 Background characteristics of ICT worldwide: fast growing company, hierarchical structure	118
5.5.2 Employment policies at sub-national levels: relevant employment policies at sub-national levels only at the headquarters' level	120
5.5.3 Transfer: hierarchy and centralised control for fully owned subsidiaries	120
Part III: Findings	126
Chapter VI: How do social actors shape employment policies at multiple sub-national levels?	128
6.1 Introduction	129
6.2 Employment policies at sub-national levels and social actors within MNCs.....	129
6.2.1 What are employment policies at sub-national levels?	129
6.2.2 Dynamic sub-national levels	132
6.2.3 Employment policies at sub-national levels in Belgium	133
6.3 How do subsidiaries' social actors shape employment policies at sub-national levels?	135
6.3.1 Within case study analysis-resources at sub-national levels	135

6.3.2 Discussion and cross-comparative analysis: Kinds of institutional entrepreneurship or co-evolution.....	140
6.4 Conclusion.....	146
Chapter VII: How do employment policies at multiple sub-national levels affect headquarters' control, centralisation and subsidiaries' discretion in MNCs?	149
7.1 Introduction	150
7.2 Employment policies at complementary sub-national levels and headquarters' control, centralisation and discretion.....	150
7.2.1 How can employment policies at sub-national levels enable MNCs to achieve their objectives?	152
7.2.2 How can employment policies at complementary sub-national levels affect discretion and headquarters' control in MNCs' subsidiaries in Belgium?	153
7.3 Employment policies at complementary sub-national levels, discretion and headquarters' control	156
7.3.1 Subsidiaries' discretion, centralisation and headquarters' control	156
7.3.2 Complementary sub-national levels	160
7.3.3 Complementarity enhancing discretion.....	163
7.4 Conclusion.....	165
Chapter VIII: How do employment policies at multiple sub-national levels affect headquarters-subsidiary configurations and subsidiaries' roles?	167
8.1 Introduction	168
8.2 The resource-based view for the study on headquarters-subsidiary configurations: Origin and evolution.....	169
8.3 Headquarters-subsidiary configurations and employment policies at sub-national levels in Belgium	171
8.3.1 Configurations as strategic and employment policies at sub-national levels	171
8.3.2 How do employment levels at sub-national levels fit into the Bartlett and Ghoshal configuration	172
8.3.3 Employment policies at sub-national levels in Belgium	174
8.4 Presenting an adapted typology	175
8.4.1 MNCs' competences and location advantages	175
8.4.2 How integrating employment policies at sub-national levels affects subsidiaries' roles ...	179
8.5 Conclusion.....	182
Chapter IX: Synthesis.....	184
9.1 Introduction	185
9.2 Integrated theoretical framework	185
9.3 Do subsidiaries' social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels?	186

9.3.1 Case study analysis.....	186
9.3.2 Discussion	187
Part IV: Conclusion	190
10.1 Introduction	191
10.2 Theoretical implications of the research findings.....	191
10.2.1 Research finding I: Social actors shape employment policies at multiple sub-national levels in line with their aims if there are resources to do so.....	191
10.2.2 Research finding II : Employment policies at multiple sub-national levels are used by social actors to mediate headquarters' control, centralisation and subsidiaries' discretion	193
10.2.3 Research finding III : Employment policies at multiple sub-national levels are used by social actors to alter subsidiaries' roles	195
10.3 Methodological implications	196
10.2.1 For the studies on the transfer so far	196
10.3.2 Can the results be generalised?.....	197
10.4 Policy implications	200
References	203
Appendix	223
Summary	244
Samenvatting	246
Résumé	248

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List of abbreviations

CAO	Collective Labour Agreement
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GUO	Global Ultimate Owner
HRM	Human Resource Management
IR	Industrial Relations
LDC	Low Developing Countries
LOG	Largest Occupational Group
MNC	Multinational Corporation or Company
SME	Small or Medium Sized Enterprise
WTO	World Trade Organisation

List of tables

Table 1 Ideal types of transfer	29
Table 2 Overview of theoretical perspectives	33
Table 3 Employment policies at sub-national levels	44
Table 4 Overview of concept, definition and measurement of an MNC for investigating the transfer	70
Table 5 Overview of secondary datasets	72
Table 6 Result of the revision of national and international datasets	75
Table 7 Overview of the interviews	84
Table 8 Overview of consulted documents	87
Table 9 Non-response.....	98
Table 10 Overview of MNCs' main characteristics	122
Table 11 Co-evolution and institutional entrepreneurship	142
Table 12 Location advantages and subsidiaries' competences for headquarters-subsidiary configurations	173
Table 13 Synthesis.....	189
Table 14 Reflection on the business system approach	195
Table 15 Findings on discretion in MNCs' subsidiaries in Belgium	198
Table 16 Presence of control in MNCs' subsidiaries in Belgium	199
Table 17 Overview of studies explaining the transfer	224
Table 18 Overview of studies using secondary datasets	230
Table 19 Topic guide company level	231
Table 20 Topic guide sector level	233
Table 21 Index.....	234
Table 22 Codebook	240

List of figures

Figure 1 FDI as a per centage of GDP	13
Figure 2 Factors influencing new investments or mandates.....	14
Figure 3 PhD outline	19
Figure 4 Dimensions of transfer	30
Figure 5 Illustration of the conceptual framework	42
Figure 6 Illustration of validity	73
Figure 7 Overview of research steps in constructing a representative MNC population	74
Figure 8 Overview of research steps	90
Figure 9 Overview of steps in data-management and analysis	93
Figure 10 Structure of Waste Belgium.....	105
Figure 11 Structure of Food Belgium.....	112
Figure 12 Structure of Packaging Belgium	117
Figure 13 Structure of ICT	120
Figure 14 Employment policies at complementary sub-national levels and discretion	164
Figure 15 Different subsidiaries' roles based on the typology of Bartlett and Ghoshal.....	169
Figure 16 Adapted subsidiaries' roles after integrating employment policies at sub-national levels .	180

Introduction

This thesis integrates employment policies at the sub-national level in the study on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices from multinationals' headquarters to Belgian subsidiaries. Contrary to existing studies, it focuses on employment policies at multiple sub-national levels rather than on one sub-national level only. Specifically, it deals with how regional and inter-firm employment policies, like training initiatives foreseen by the regional government or pension funds on the sector level, affect the subsidiary's decision-making role with regard to pay and training policies and practices. To study this topic, the first preliminary chapter will describe the research context and formulate the research question. Thereafter it will describe how investigating the research question adds to existing studies on the transfer. This is followed by the outline of the thesis. The chapter ends by a brief report on the findings.

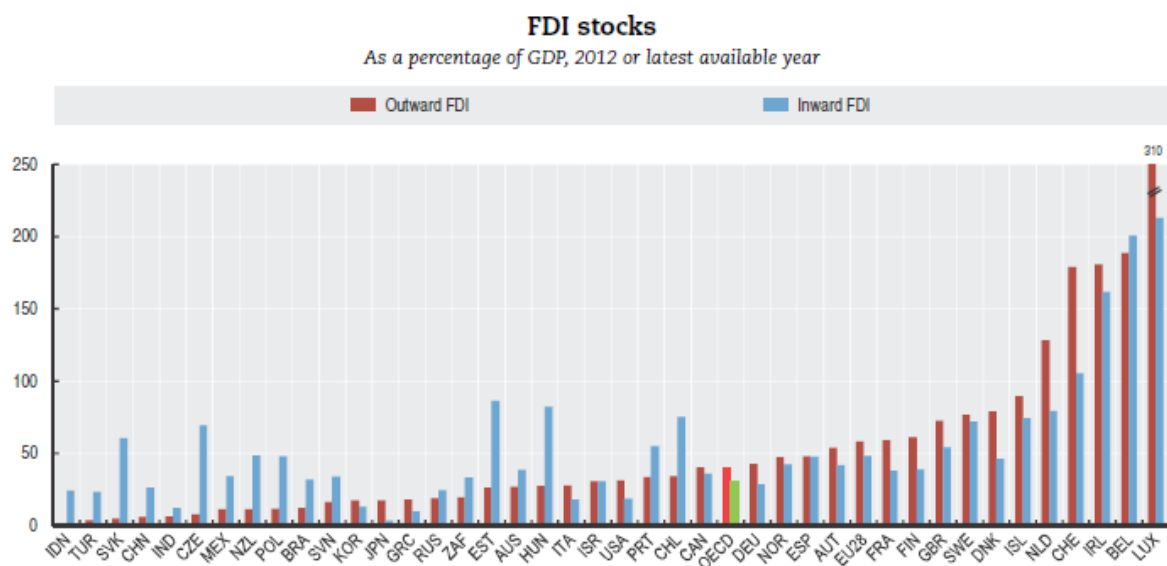
0.1 The context

There is no doubt that multinational companies (further referred to as MNCs) are of great importance for employment in Belgium. In 2011, foreign MNCs employed 500.000 employees in their Belgian operations. This is 11 per cent of the total active population in Belgium, which means that at least one out of ten employees is employed within a MNC (Verbond van Belgische Ondernemingen [VBO], 2013). This direct effect on employment is also illustrated when MNCs decide to close or restructure Belgian operations. Recent cases – Ford Genk, Arcelor Mittal or Caterpillar – show that not only the employees working in the restructured Belgian operations are affected. Also suppliers undergo simultaneous or subsequent restructuring. So the international integration of production has major implications on how employment is organised because of the way it contributes to workforce development. Specifically, new investments directly create employment. Mergers or acquisitions, on the contrary, lead to employees being relocated or dismissed. Besides this direct effect on the number of jobs created or relocated, MNCs have an indirect influence on employment. Particularly, by their presence, MNCs influence employment policies and practices within suppliers, clients and services companies (Crouch, Schröder, & Voelzkow, 2009; Zeitlin, 2004; 2008). Furthermore MNCs are able to transfer or disseminate employment policies and practices to foreign subsidiaries, like pay and performance, training and organisational learning, employee involvement and communication and employee representation (Almond et al., 2005; Cantwell, Dunning, & Lundan, 2010). For example MNCs' headquarters develop a system of job classification and implement it in all subsidiaries worldwide.

Figures on the direct influence of MNCs' presence on employment rates are hard to find. Therefore, the number of financial flows is most frequently used as a proxy for the number of jobs created (Aharoni & Brock, 2010; Dunning & Lundan, 2008). Based on the most recently available figures,

Belgium shows to have a relative high per centage of foreign direct investment stocks (FDI) in gross domestic product (GDP). These figures reflect Belgium's open economy and its dependence on foreign investors (figure 1) (Organisation for Economic Coordination and Development [OECD], 2013). This attractiveness should not come as a surprise when the literature on FDI is taken into account. Specifically, institutional and economic resources have been identified to inhibit or contribute to FDI (Almond et al., 2014; Meyer, Mudambi, & Narula, 2011). The former refers to country specific institutions such as systems of industrial relations and labour markets. The latter refers to the nature of products, services or knowledge, research and development, the share of professional and technical workers and the level of innovation and specialisation (Jensen, 2003).

Figure 1 FDI as a per centage of GDP

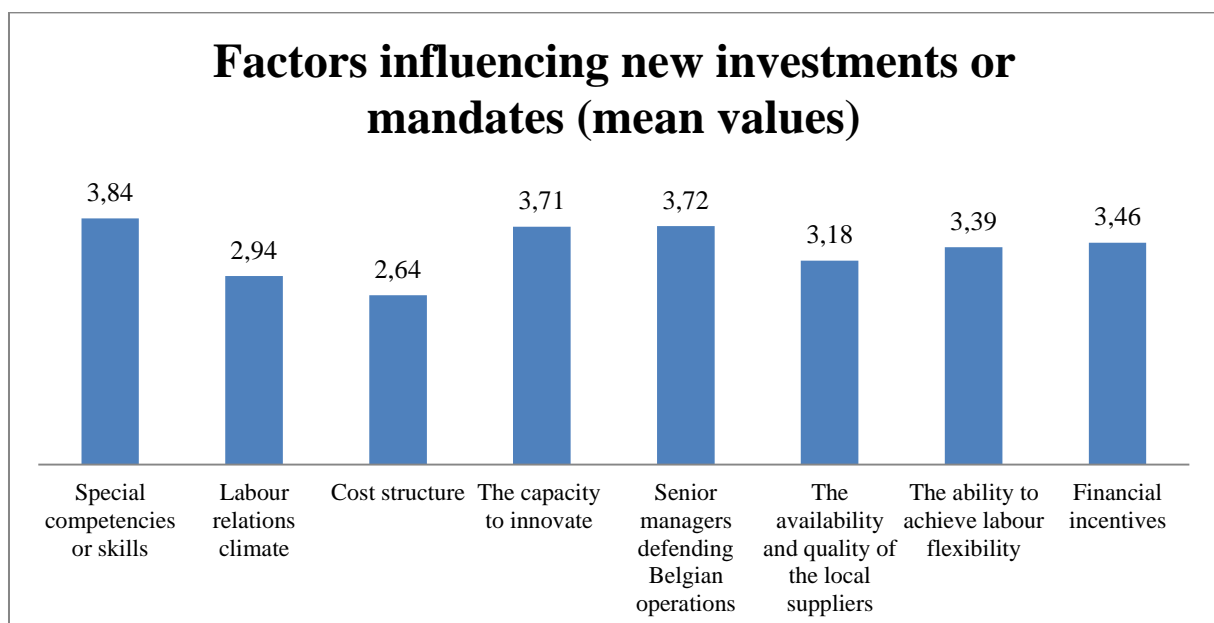


OECD (2013), FDI stocks (Inward FDI minus Outward FDI)

In line with this literature, three factors seem to be important for MNCs investing in Belgium: the special competencies and skills of the workforce, the role of senior managers in the Belgian operations and the innovative capabilities of the Belgian subsidiaries. The system of industrial relations and collective bargaining causes a slightly inhibiting effect (figure 2) (Pulignano & Dekocker, 2014). It is, however, remarkable that attracting factors (skill and education system and industrial policy fostering innovation), are regionalised policy domains. This means that within countries, the policies at sub-national levels can compete for inward investment by offering a more favourable institutional framework or competitive resources (Almond et al., 2014; Meyer et al., 2011). In this regard, policies at multiple sub-national levels allow MNCs to differentiate, specialise and fragment their subsidiaries' (employment) policies as opposed to competitors (Zeitlin, 2004). Furthermore, the Belgian system of collective bargaining tends to have a strong focus on the sector level like in many other OECD countries (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2003). Based on this, it is concluded that FDI and the number of jobs

relate to the sub-national Belgian context. This is in line with the observation that for employment within MNCs, policies at multiple sub-national levels have become increasingly important. Specifically, national labour markets are internally heterogeneous because of other skill preferences, systems of training or the presence of specific employers' and trade organisations (Almond, 2011; Almond et al., 2005; Muller, 1998). The importance of these policies at sub-national levels for employment is further reinforced by its nature. Contrary to finance, human capital is more sub-nationally bounded as employees are far less mobile. Even in the case of the European Union, where barriers and borders have been opened, only a number of employees became mobile. Language issues or the strong link with the regional and local community are explanatory in this regard (Meyer et al., 2011).

Figure 2 Factors influencing new investments or mandates



Pulignano and Dekocker (2014)

More generally, the importance of policies at sub-national levels for MNCs has increased because they encompass supportive rules, norms, organisational forms and institutions for the global accumulation process (Almond et al, 2014; Brenner, 2001; Goodwin, 2001; Valler & Wood, 2010). Particularly, decreasing regulatory barriers at the national level, decreasing transportation costs and increasing communication facilities provide for a globalised economy. In addition, the use of these facilities is not equal, causing the emergence of unequal regions (capital and labour intensive regions) or the reinforcement of (under) developed regions. Moreover, there is a tendency towards specialisation and differentiation. Ideal typical regions focusing on manufacturing and services, and regions with specialisation in finance and retail have been observed (Feenstra, 1998; Gibbon, Bair, & Ponte, 2008).

Accordingly, regulation is no longer imposed by a centralised coordinated state level alone. Rather, alternative policy levels like policies at the level of the regional governments and inter-firm levels come forward (Amin, 1999). Some authors even state that the policies at sub-national levels have become the key territorial units in an era of neo-liberal globalisation (Burroni, 2014; Cumbers, MacKinnon, & McMaster, 2003; Hudson, 2007). Based on this, it is surprising that policies at sub-national levels have only marginally been considered for the indirect effect of MNCs on employment. The indirect effect refers to the way employment policies and practices have been transferred within MNCs and how MNCs influence employment policies and practices within different operational contexts (Almond, 2011; Morgan, 2007). As such there is a scope to enlarge knowledge on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries by incorporating the employment policies at multiple sub-national levels and MNCs as active social actors. To integrate policies at sub-national levels and social actors into the study on the transfer, the next paragraph will formulate the research question and review existing studies on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries to contextualise the research question.

0.2 What is the research question?

To date, studies on the transfer from headquarters to subsidiaries reflect MNCs' balance between converging (internal consistency) and diverging (local adaptation) employment policies and practices (Almond et al., 2005; Edwards, Marginson, & Ferner, 2013). Against this backdrop, it is important to understand how national regulatory frameworks can limit MNCs' choice and how local competition can push MNCs to prefer one employment practice above the other (Rozenzweig & Nohria, 1994). Similarly important are organisational variables, like subsidiaries' resources or active trade unions to explain local adaptation and limited convergence (Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005; Pulignano, 2006).

Since employment policies and practices have been observed to be similar within -or vary across- countries (Almond et al., 2005; Edwards et al., 2013), much of the available research has focused on this global-local dimension and the convergence-divergence debate. Indeed, within empirical studies, the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries has been found to converge based on isomorphic forces (Kostova & Roth, 2002; Pudelko & Harzing, 2007) and equal transaction costs between companies (Birkinshaw & Morrison, 1995; Ghoshal & Nohria, 1989). Divergence, on the contrary, has been observed based on national business systems (Ferner et al., 2004; Edwards et al., 2013) and subsidiaries' resources (Malnight, 2001; Rugman, Verbeke, & Yuan, 2011). What empirical studies on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs to date do not integrate sufficiently, is the presence of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. This is surprising because of the amount of literature devoted to the importance of employment policies at different sub-

national levels for the transfer within MNCs (Almond, 2011; Heidenreich, 2012; Lane & Wood, 2009; Meyer et al., 2011). In addition, studies found social actors in MNCs as actively engaging in employment policies at sub-national levels (Cantwell et al., 2010; Crouch & Farrell, 2004; Kristensen & Morgan, 2007; Saka-Helmout & Geppert, 2011).

A more comprehensive study on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries would include employment policies at multiple sub-national levels and the active role of social actors within MNCs. Some studies already integrated employment policies at sub-national levels into the study of the transfer; it has, however, only partially been done (one sub-national level) (Bélanger, Lévesque, Jalette, & Murray, 2013) or has indirectly been integrated (not main research focus) (Muller, 1998). The study of Bélanger et al. (2013) for example, focused on the value chain and the level of subsidiaries' discretion on subsidiaries' employment policies and practices. They found that being part of local employers' federations affects subsidiaries' discretion, as membership in these federations allows having knowledge on innovative practices or accessing shared employment policies at sub-national levels. Similarly, studies so far focused on social actors' engagement at sub-national levels (Almond et al., 2014; Crouch et al., 2009; Kristensen & Morgan, 2007). The study of Almond et al. (2014) found MNCs not merely operating in isolation from countries where investments are made: investments are made based on potential engagement to construct more favourable policies at multiple sub-national levels for the MNCs themselves. Furthermore, the relevant sub-national levels for the study of the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries have been theoretically distinguished but have not been empirically investigated (Almond, 2011). This means that, until recently, there has not been any reliable evidence on how subsidiaries' social actors (employees and employers and their representative organisations) shape employment policies at multiple sub-national levels and at the same time influence the transfer of employment policies and practices within MNCs. Therefore this study addresses the following general research question: *Do subsidiaries' social actors mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices within MNCs' subsidiaries by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels?* How this research question will be answered will be explained in the next paragraph.

0.3 How has the research question been answered?

This thesis will address the integration of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels into the study on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Specifically, it will investigate whether social actors mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices by shaping employment policies at sub-national levels. To investigate this, the general research question will be split up into two research questions. The first one will examine how subsidiaries' social actors

(employees and employers and their representative organisations) shape employment policies at sub-national levels. The second one examines how employment policies at sub-national levels mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries.

In order to investigate these two research questions, four multinationals with at least 2 subsidiaries in Belgium have been selected. Belgium, as a research context, is used to investigate these two questions because of its highly sub-national character (Boschma, 1999; Witte, 2009). Specifically, in Belgium, the sub-national level encompasses the level of the regional government, the sector level and the level of the web of inter-firm relations. In order to integrate these levels into the study on the transfer of employment policies and practices within MNCs' subsidiaries, trade union representatives, local managers, employers' federations and sector representatives have been interviewed. During these interviews, a distinction has been made between two dimensions of the transfer: 1) discretion, centralisation and headquarters' control and 2) the headquarters-subsidiary configuration. The distinction between these two dimensions is investigated like this, since previous studies have shown its relevance (Ferner, Almond, & Colling, 2005; Marginson, Edwards, Edwards, Ferner, & Tregaskis, 2010; Quintanilla, Susaeta, & Sanchez-Mangas, 2008). Subsidiaries' employment policies and practices are understood as pay and training policies. Accordingly, the thesis will focus on employment policies at sub-national levels fostering or inhibiting pay and training policies and practices. Pay policies and practices refer to formal systems of appraisal (a system for setting individuals' performance objectives and monitoring performance against past objectives carried out annually or more frequently), variable pay (merit pay, performance-related pay, performance-related bonuses or payment by results) or job classification (difference in added value of different functions within the company). Training refers to vocational training, defined as training sessions offered by internal or external organisations to employees in order to adjust and adapt employees' skills to meet changing demands and remain competitive (Cappelli, 2012; Colbert, 2004). This vocational training composes both general and job specific training. By general training, the study refers to training for personal development (e.g. presentation skills, negotiation skills); by specific training the study refers to training for the job (e.g. statistical software for researchers).

Pay and training are focused on because of several reasons. First of all, training policies have been identified as a relevant policy domain for the integration of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels into the study of transfer within MNCs (Almond, 2011). Specifically, training has been observed to become increasingly subjected to sub-national legislation or regulation (Cognard, 2011). Also in Belgium, regional governments and sectors foresee in training institutes. In this respect, if the study expects employment policies at multiple sub-nationals to be influential and shaped by subsidiaries' social actors, it is expected for training policies. Secondly, the focus is on training policies because a lot of European countries have been confronted with a shortage of employees for

particular jobs and as such, training, from a strategic point of view, allows companies to execute their main activity (Noe, 2003). This is further reinforced by the ageing population that is faced by many developed countries. To compensate for the expected war for talent, investments in training and the presence of training policies are indeed expected to increase. However, training policies are also sensitive for negative forecasts of companies. This means that companies that are being restructured and profit-losing companies tend to invest less in training. In this respect, the research must guarantee an employment policy and therefore added the pay policy since this is, although not always well developed, present in companies. Besides this, in Belgium pay is negotiated collectively on the national and sector level, with an increasing importance for the sector level. Finally, both training and pay policies have been observed to be the most frequently studied employment policies and practices in empirical studies (Ferner et al., 2005; Marginson et al., 2010; Quintanilla et al., 2008). Although studies do not always make a distinction between the transfer of pay and training policies and practices, they are most frequently combined in the concept of employment policies and practices.

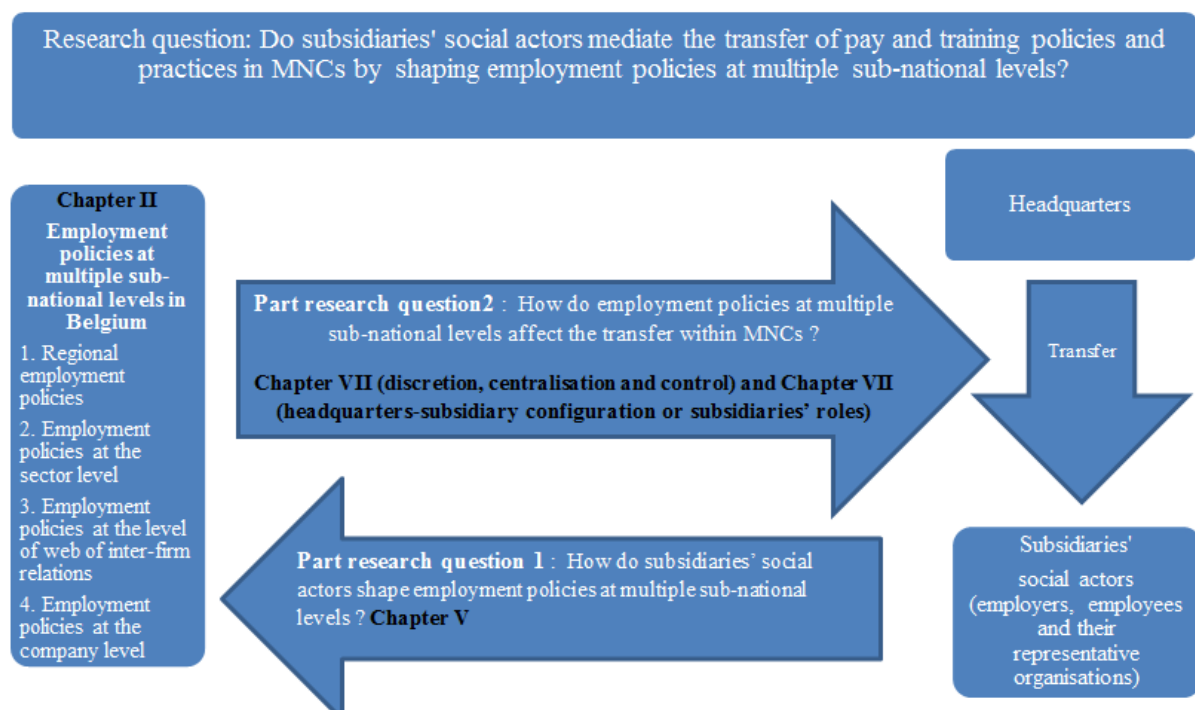
To investigate how employment policies at sub-national levels are shaped by subsidiaries' social actors to mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices, the remainder of the thesis is divided in four parts. Part I is the literature review and composes chapter I and II. Chapter I defines the main concepts in our research and formulates propositions regarding the expected relations among them. It focuses on theoretical frameworks and empirical studies on employment policies and practices without emphasising pay and training policies and practices. Chapter II describes the research context. Specifically, it illustrates the nature of pay and training policies and the differences among them. In addition, the second chapter portrays the relevant employment policies at sub-national levels in Belgium. These chapters are followed by the second part, the methodology. In the second part, chapter III illustrates the way the MNC population has been set up and the way cases have been selected. Chapter IV explains how the data has been collected and Chapter V describes the case studies used. The third part includes four chapters and describes the findings. Chapter VI is the first empirical chapter and examines how subsidiaries' social actors shape employment policies at sub-national levels. The outcome of this chapter is then used to investigate how employment policies at sub-national levels mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Therefore, the study makes a distinction, as mentioned previously, between centralisation, discretion and headquarters' control on the one hand (Chapter VII) and the headquarter-subsidary configuration on the other hand (Chapter VIII). The last chapter of the finding section synthesises chapters VI till VIII.

The empirical part will thus explore four (part) research questions:

- Chapter VI: How do subsidiaries' social actors shape employment policies at multiple sub-national levels?
- Chapter VII: How do employment policies at multiple sub-national levels affect centralisation, headquarters' control and subsidiaries' discretion?
- Chapter VIII: How do employment policies at multiple sub-national levels affect headquarters-subsidiary configurations and subsidiaries' roles?
- Chapter IX: Do subsidiaries' social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels?

The thesis ends with a fourth part formulating a conclusion and some implications. Before the four parts will be described, the final section of this introduction will briefly report on the question's relevance and the results found.

Figure 3 PhD outline



0.4 Why is this question relevant?

By answering the main research question, the thesis generally contributes to existing studies on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. As Ferner, Edwards and Tempel (2012) stated, integrating the influence of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels in empirical studies would be a conceptual step forward as theoretically relevant levels and spheres have been identified (Almond, 2011; Whitley, 2000). Therefore, the study innovatively integrates two streams of literature on MNCs into the study on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries: studies on active subsidiaries' social actors (employees and employers and their representative organisations) within MNCs and the literature on policies at sub-national levels.

Besides this general contribution, the thesis more specifically contributes on a conceptual, methodological and empirical level. The conceptual contribution results from the idea that employment policies at multiple sub-national levels are not merely constraining MNCs. Rather, subsidiaries' social actors are seen as actively engaging in these policies at multiple sub-national levels to align these policies with their employment strategy. This means that employers, employees and their representative organisations are expected to use their seats on boards of directors or joint committees to emphasise a policy aim like job security, or implement a particular practice like meal vouchers. In this vein, subsidiaries co-evolve with employment policies at multiple sub-national levels as there is a reciprocal relation between these policies and subsidiaries' social actors (Heidenreich, 2012). Furthermore, by integrating employment policies at multiple sub-national levels, it elaborates on the theoretical perspectives, the business system approach and the resource-based view, in order to explain diverging subsidiaries' employment policies and practices. Specifically, in line with the initial conceptualisation of the business system approach, other levels and policy domains besides the national level were taken into account. Indeed, not only business systems were considered as specific configurations of state, financial sphere, skill development and relations between companies and actors on the national level, but Whitley (2000) also identified additional variation like policies at the level of the regional government and at the level of the web of inter-firm relations. The national level is in the business system approach still considered as being important, as country specificities shape the sub-national architecture. However, the thesis uses literature on within country variation and institutional variance to show the relevance of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels to explain the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries (Burroni, 2014). Moreover, combining employment policies at multiple sub-national levels with the resource-based view results in the presence of sub-national location advantages besides the national level. Differences between employment policies at regional governments and their regional agencies can indeed cause different location advantages for companies. Also the employment policies at the inter-firm level

foresees in different location advantages based on the extent of shared information, shared knowledge and participation in institutions (Molina-Moralez & Martinez-Fernandez, 2008; Zeitlin, 2004).

The methodological contribution of the study is a result of the first representative dataset of MNCs operating in Belgium, studying the transfer of pay and training policies and practices within MNCs. At the start of the study, a representative dataset of MNCs was not available, and as such a representative dataset had to be set up. The creation of this dataset, based on secondary datasets of Amadeus, Belfirst and Trendstop, was part of a quantitative research on employment policies and practices in Belgium¹. By carefully identifying and defining the MNC population, the study contributes to studies on MNCs on the one hand, and studies on employment on the other hand through the development of a representative dataset based on country of origin, ownership structure and employment size. Previous studies (table 18 in appendix) indeed showed problems regarding the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the MNC that has business in Belgium. Specifically, the majority of the empirical studies on Belgium lack a clear description or well-defined criteria on how the investigated MNCs have been selected. Even studies that do define the MNC or selection criteria show some drawbacks. Firstly, the link between the conceptual definition of the MNC and the way it is operationalised is often missing. (Du, Deloof & Jorissen (2011). Moreover, the selected MNCs only reflect particular sectors or countries of origin (Van Beveren, 2011) though data are used to draw generalising conclusions on the MNC population in Belgium. And secondly, the validity of the available secondary sources (Amadeus, Belfirst and Trendstop) is not sufficiently questioned.

Finally the study on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries also contributes on an empirical level since only indirect (Muller, 1998) or partial measurements of employment policies at sub-national levels (Bélanger et al., 2013; Crouch et al., 2009) have been found to influence the transfer on employment policies and practices. Case study research conducted by Muller (1998) on US MNCs operating in Germany, indicates that training is organised in a variety of ways within the country. In some cases, a local institution (the Chamber of Commerce and Industry) helped the MNCs' subsidiary to develop training. While some interviewees referred to a lack of support from headquarters for vocational training because of doubts concerning its value for some subsidiaries, policies at sub-national levels can facilitate the organisation of training (Almond et al., 2005; Muller, 1998). Moreover, studies on US MNCs operating in Britain illustrate that decision-making on training differs as a consequence of specific regional labour market requirements (Almond et al., 2005; Ferner et al., 2005). More recently Bélanger et al. (2013) identified policies at the sub-

¹ The construction of the MNC population has been set up as part of a quantitative study on the transfer of employment policies and practices in Belgium. This project is part of international inter-university research (INTREPID research network). The research project in Belgium had Prof dr Valeria Pulignano (KUL) and Prof dr Evelyne Léonard (UCL) as promoters.

national level to be important and tested this level on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. More specifically, Bélanger et al. (2013) found that local embeddedness increases the extent of discretion regarding employment practices in MNCs' subsidiaries in Canada. If subsidiaries have a solid local integration, i.e. that they are part of local industry forums and take part in local employer associations' activities, discretion is higher. Within these studies, researchers however did not conceptually distinguish between different employment policies at multiple sub-national levels in order to be able to examine them afterwards as this study did. Specifically, studies on the transfer of employment policies and practices did not integrate employment policies at multiple sub-national levels to study the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Put differently, so far no study empirically investigated how employment policies at multiple sub-national levels shaped by social actors, mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs. This way, the thesis provides an important opportunity to advance the understanding on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs (Delbridge, Hauptmeier, & Sengupta, 2011; Ferner, Edwards, & Tempel, 2012; Morgan, 2007).

0.5 What do the research results tell us?

Based on the analysis of the interviews, four main findings are put forward to explain whether subsidiaries' social actors use employment policies at multiple sub-national levels to mediate the transfer: 1) the availability of different types of resources provided by employment policies at multiple sub-national levels to engage in these policies, 2) the needed presence of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels, 3) the way employment policies at sub-national levels are in accordance with subsidiaries' social actors' aims and headquarters' aims, and 4) the nature of pay and training policies and practices. For the former, the study has observed a wide range of available resources that subsidiaries' social actors can make use of to shape employment policies at sub-national levels. In line with the literature (Meyer et al., 2011) institutional resources like the board of directors and committees based on parity (regional development agencies and sector) were found to be used by both employers and employees and their representative organisations to shape employment policies at sub-national levels. In addition, more economic resources like inter-firm relations or a dense network between organisations supported by innovation policies are used by social actors to foster collaboration between companies. The latter results in alternative policies at the inter-firm level. However, the study also found additional resources like informal relations between subsidiary social actors and politicians, and competitive policies set up by former SME directors to be used by subsidiaries' social actors. Specifically, in these cases, other employment policies arise because social actors' aims are indirectly put forward, or existing site or subsidiaries' policies still contribute, even

after mergers or take-overs, to the competitive advantage of the MNC. As a consequence, these policies remain instead of the worldwide or national employment policy.

A second result is related to the presence of policies at multiple sub-national levels. Put differently, one level does not necessarily suffice. Additionally, the absence of one policy does not directly result in no engagement or no mediation. Instead it is the compensating or reinforcing effect between policies at sub-national levels (e.g. regional government and sector) that explains social actors' engagement or the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Therefore the concept of complementarity between policies at different sub-national levels is found to be central to the explanation of subsidiaries' social actors' engagement and transfer. Applied to our two part research questions, this means that social actors' engagement is only expected if resources at multiple reinforcing or compensating levels are present. Moreover, policies at multiple sub-national levels will only be used by social actors to mediate the transfer if policies on multiple levels are present. However, the presence of multiple resources does not suffice for shaping employment policies, nor for mediating the transfer. A second dimension of complementarity is the (in)congruence with social actors' aims. For the shaping of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels, this means that subsidiaries' social actors will only engage if these resources allow the social actors to shape these employment policies at sub-national levels in line with social actors' aims. If this is not the case, social actors will not express an intention for shaping these policies. For the mediation of the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries, headquarters' aims are put forward. Put differently, to mediate the transfer, employment policies at sub-national levels (e.g. training institutes) shaped by subsidiaries' social actors, should be seen as competitive from the headquarters' point of view. Only then headquarters will benefit from discretion or changing subsidiaries' roles. Headquarters' aims are, however, not always similar to subsidiaries' social actors' aims as some resources are based on parity, and conflicts can occur between headquarters and subsidiaries (Ferner et al., 2004; Ferner et al., 2012).

Finally, the results also depend on the nature of the employment policy or practice studied. In line with Storey (1989), the easier to measure and the more strategic the employment policy or practice, the more an employment policy or practice will be controlled. Based on our cases, pay policies were indeed much more controlled than training policies. However, when employment policies at sub-national levels, though less present for pay policies, were seen as competitive by headquarters, less control was executed. To conclude, the study found the presence of resources on employment policies at multiple sub-national levels and the alignment with social actors' aims to be core in explaining the shaping of employment policies at sub-national levels and in explaining their use to mediate the transfer. In order to give an insight in how the study came to these results, the following part theoretically embeds the research question. Thereafter, the second part describes the methodology

used. The third part reports on the findings based on the interviews. The final part discusses the theoretical, methodological and policy implications.

Part I: Literature review

Literature review is based on:

Dekocker, V., Pulignano, V., & Dewettinck, K. (2010). Exploring regional embeddedness: Elaborating on the home-host approach for the study of employment practices in MNCs. Paper presented at Work, Employment and Society Conference. Session: Conceptual Frameworks and Theoretical Controversies. Brighton, UK.

Dekocker, V., Van den Broeck, M., Léonard, E., & Pulignano, V. (2011). National Business System. Reflecting on the degree of institutional integration, distinction and cohesion of the Belgian system. Paper presented at the CRIMT Conference. Montreal, Canada.

Dekocker, V., Pulignano, V., Léonard, E., & Vandebroek, M. (2012). The National Business System and its Applications: Reflections from the Belgian Experience. *International Business Research*, 5(12), 8-18.

Chapter I: State of the Art

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a multidisciplinary state of the art describing three streams within the literature on MNCs in order to contextualise the central research question: do subsidiaries' social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. These three streams are 1) the transfer of employment practices and policies within MNCs, 2) subsidiaries' social actors engaging in policies at sub-national levels and 3) the role of policies at sub-national levels for studying employment in MNCs. It illustrates how the presented thesis innovatively combines these three streams of literature to investigate how subsidiaries' social actors (employees, employers and their representative organisations) are expected to mediate this transfer by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels, regional employment policies and inter-firm employment policies. Therefore it will first of all define the core concepts: the transfer, employment policies and practices and the MNC. Thereafter it will describe the theoretical frameworks used to explain the transfer in previous studies and the gaps in knowledge on the topic. Regarding this, chapter 1 will focus on the literature on employment policies and practices in MNCs in general, without focusing on pay and training policies and practices specifically. The chapter ends with a description of employment policies at sub-national levels and the role of social actors. In doing so, the thesis more generally adds to the understanding of the convergence-divergence debate and global-local tension. By specifically studying multiple sub-national levels, it aims at elaborating on the explanations of divergent or locally adapted employment policies within MNCs' subsidiaries.

1.2 The transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs

1.2.1 Defining the transfer

Inherent to the concept of transfer from headquarters to subsidiaries, is the presence of systems of control and coordination. These systems aim at regulating activities and encouraging behaviour or processes that are in accordance with business goals, aims and targets (Baliga & Jaeger, 1984). Although control and coordination have been used interchangeably, the concepts represent different assumptions regarding the relation between headquarters and subsidiaries. Accordingly, the way the transfer is made possible, differs. More specifically, direct report mechanisms are used to obtain control. Coordination on the contrary, refers to coordination among widely dispersed subsidiaries each having their own responsibilities (Martinez & Jarillo, 1989). In addition, in the case of control, different interest groups are considered to be prevalent within MNCs. When using the concept of coordination, common aims and means between headquarters and subsidiaries are presumed. The

concept of control is used, as previous studies have indicated conflicting interests to exist between MNCs' headquarters and their subsidiaries (Ferner et al., 2004; Ferner et al., 2012).

Organisational scholars differentiate between three types of control: bureaucratic control, personal control and control by socialisation (Baliga & Jaeger, 1984; Ferner, 2000; Martinez & Jarillo, 1989). The first group of control is reflected by the amount of written documents, policies, planning and systems set up to measure output and behaviour. In MNCs, this can refer to shared services (services used by all or the majority of the subsidiaries) and information systems (systems gaining access to information of all subsidiaries worldwide) (Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005; Gamble, 2003). The second type of control includes personal relations among managers or close direct supervision. The presence of this personal contact within MNCs can be obtained by bringing managers together on a regional or global basis, and by the presence of expats in foreign subsidiaries (Ferner et al., 2004). The final type of control is the result of socialisation, referring to values and attitudes that are considered to be legitimate (Baliga & Jaeger, 1984; Martinez & Jarillo, 1989). Organisational learning policies and a common corporate culture are instruments put forward to foster this socialisation process in MNCs (Vora & Kostova, 2007). The research will initially focus on bureaucratic control as previous studies have indicated that systems and procedures to spread these policies and practices among widely disseminated subsidiaries are common practice (Edwards, Tregaskis, Edwards, Ferner, & Marginson, 2007; McDonnell, Lavelle, & Gunnigle, 2007; Minbaeva & Navrbjerg, 2011). In addition, informal mechanisms like personal control and control by socialisation are added to and not substituted by bureaucratic control, as they are more costly to implement (Martinez & Jarillo, 1989). Consequently, bureaucratic control is most likely to be observed.

Investigating the presence of control however, would be too limited to be able to investigate the transfer of employment policies and practices since other formal mechanisms have been observed as well (Martinez & Jarillo, 1989). Indeed, other dimensions of transfer, like centralisation and discretion, are of particular interest for MNCs because of their structure. Specifically MNCs' structure has been known to include international product, service -or brand divisions, regional headquarters and global business functions (Edwards et al., 2007b; McDonnell et al., 2007; Minbaeva & Navrbjerg, 2011). Because of these different levels in MNCs, the locus of decision-making next to control is relevant as well. Centralisation can thus be defined as a decision making process between headquarters and subsidiaries, in which control is to a particular extent hierarchically organised (Ghoshal & Nohria, 1989; Martinez & Jarillo, 1989). Put differently, centralisation is inversely related to the extent of subsidiary's discretion: depending on whether the subsidiary is forced to implement a policy or practice set by a higher level, whether the subsidiary can develop a policy or practice within the guidelines/framework set by a higher organisational level or whether the subsidiary can set its own

policy and practices (Edwards et al., 2007b; McDonell et al., 2007; Minbaeva & Navrbjerg, 2011). A higher organisational level can hereby refer to the global, regional or national headquarters (figure 4).

Table 1 Ideal types of transfer

Formal Mechanisms	Control	Span of control	Headquarters-subsidary configurations
	Bureaucratic control	Centralisation	Hierarchy
		Discretion	
Informal mechanisms	Personal control		
	Control by socialisation		
		Decentralisation	Heterarchy

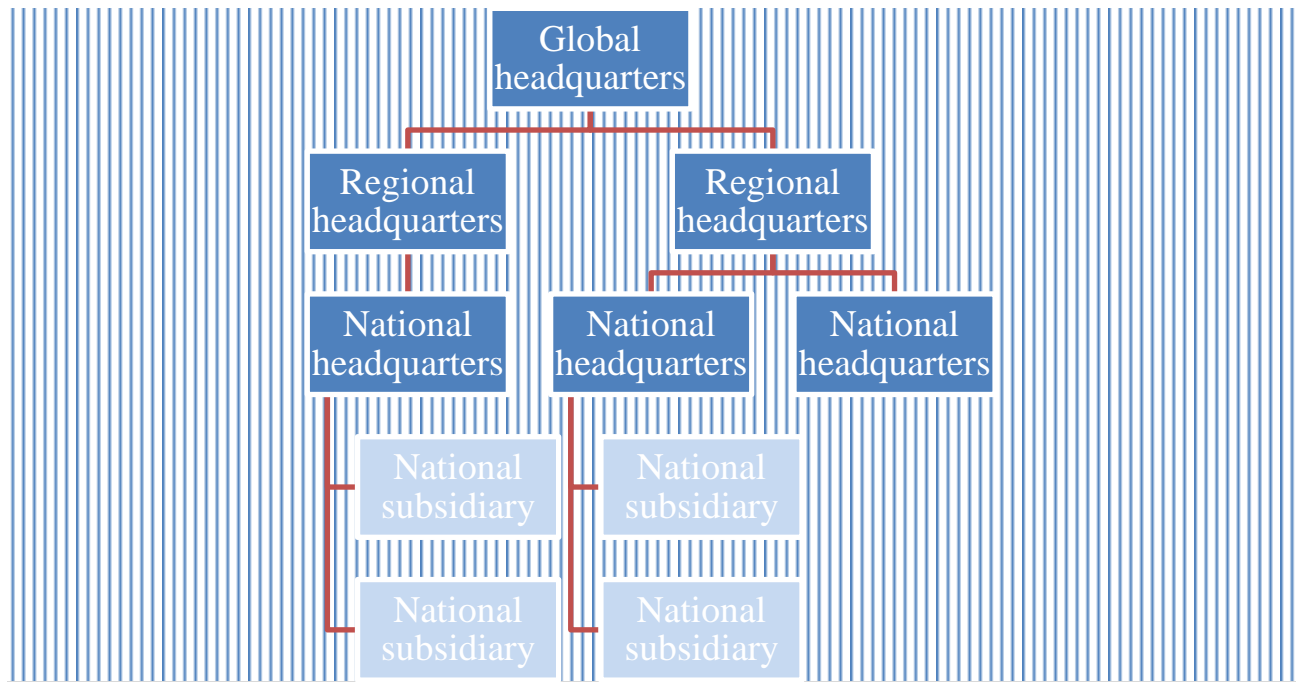
Source: own processing based on Martinez and Jarillo (1989)

The final dimension of transfer is related to the way the employment policies and practices have been more generally set up between headquarters and subsidiaries. This headquarters-subsidary configuration is defined as a tight constellation of mutually supportive elements, a set of formal and informal employment tools (Birkinshaw & Morrison, 1995). An ideal typical distinction is made between hierarchy and heterarchy. The former is described as a number of subsidiaries where relations are centralised and horizontal linkages are rather limited to keep the coordination cost low (Bird, Taylor, & Beechler, 1998; Birkinshaw & Morrison, 1995). The latter refers to subsidiaries that are connected based on a high number of horizontal linkages. Accordingly, other roles are foreseen for subsidiaries with regard to employment. What is core to ideal types however, is that configurations of employment policies and practices are somewhere between the two ideal types. This means that characteristics of hierarchic and heterarchic companies are combined. In addition, it is expected that the nature of the policy or practice (e.g. variable pay, profit sharing or training) and the role of the subsidiary will be influential as well (Porter, 1985). This means that a particular headquarters-subsidary configuration can be organised in another way as well, depending on the subsidiary or employment policy studied (Ghoshal & Nohria, 1989; Rubery & Grimshaw, 2003). A similar reasoning is followed for the other dimensions of transfer, control, centralisation and discretion. For example, whether control is executed or not depends on the measurement possibilities and the strategic importance for MNCs' competitive advantage of a particular practice or policy (Storey, 1990). Finally, these mechanisms are connected (figure 4 and table 1) (Alonso, Dessein, & Matouschek; 2008; Whisler, Meyer, Baum, & Sorensen, 1967). Specifically, where bureaucratic control is much more

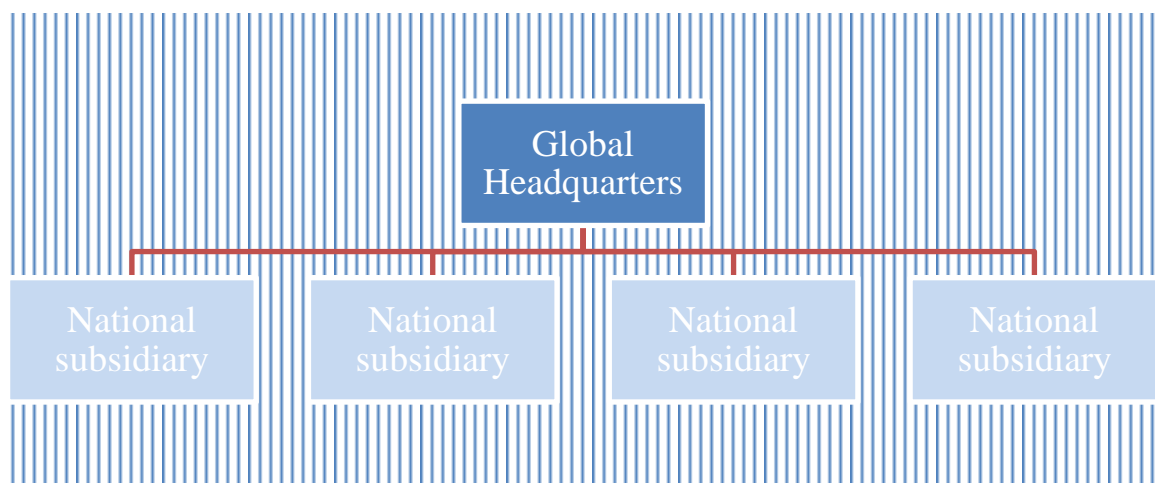
related to centralisation and a hierarchic headquarters-subsidary configuration, informal integrative mechanisms like personal control and control by socialisation, are more related to decentralisation.

Figure 4 Dimensions of transfer

Hierarchy



Heterarchy



Bureaucratic Control: number of control systems on each of these levels

Centralisation

Discretion

Headquarters-subsidary configuration-striped

1.2.2 Defining the transfer of employment policies and practices

A second concept that needs to be defined is the concept of employment policies and practices. Within the concept of employment, the study distinguishes between employment policies and employment practices as two separate dimensions within a company's employment system (Arthur & Boyles, 2007; Colbert, 2004). Specifically, an employment policy is based on a general employment goal of the company for which a number of initiatives are set up. Put differently, the employment policy reflects a more practical level of the employment goals of the company (e.g. continuous learning). For executing this policy, headquarters propose an elaborated list of instruments to be used to obtain this goal. In reality however, not all initiatives are implemented. This means that headquarters and subsidiaries select specific employment practices from a list of instruments in order to execute the policies (Arthur & Boyles, 2007; Colbert, 2004). Accordingly, a transfer of an employment policy not necessarily implies a transfer of all proposed practices.

Moreover the study uses the concept of employment policies and practices to combine elements of industrial relations (IR) and human resource management (HRM), as both have been widely investigated within the literature on the transfer (Quintanilla et al., 2008; Marginson et al., 2010). The study of industrial relations is hereby defined as both the study of indirect forms of representation by trade unions and less regulated or more direct forms of representation like joint consultation arrangements. Indeed, the study of industrial relations has evolved towards a more inclusive approach (Meardi, in press). Specifically, IR studies integrate non-collective aspects of labour on the company level and go beyond the original research focus of institutions of employment only (Blyton & Turnbull, 2003; Meardi, in press). In this way, the study of IR incorporates aspects of HRM. The latter is described as the way individuals are managed to enhance the achievement of organisational objectives. Therefore, organisations use HR tools like performance management, rewarding, communication and training to enhance employees' commitment (Heery, Bacon, Blyton, & Fiorito, 2008; Farnham & Pilmott, 1997). Similar to IR, current studies on HRM consider HRM and IR as more and more complementary rather than as substitutes (Boxall, in press). This complementarity is confirmed in empirical studies. For example, McDonald, Tüsselmann, & Heise (2003) found that collective labour relations still remain in the presence of direct employee involvement mechanisms. Therefore, by using the concept of employment, it encompasses both IR and HRM dimensions for the transfer within MNCs (Townsend & Wilkinson, 2014, Williams & Derek, 2010).

1.2.3 Defining the transfer of employment policies and practices in multinational companies

A final core concept is the concept of a MNC. A general accepted definition of what a multinational should look like in order to be able to study the transfer of employment policies and practices is lacking (Aharoni and Brock, 2010; Hoos, 2000). Foreign direct investment (FDI), referring to firms from one country buying and controlling an investment, or setting up a branch or subsidiary in another country, is therefore often used as a starting point (OECD, 2013). However, FDI as a key indicator is insufficient to study the transfer within MNCs. More specifically, MNCs can be operational in several host countries without having investments from the home country or without having enough employees to set up employment policies (Hennart, 2009; Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1997). This is the case when using practices like sub-contracting, licensing or setting up sales offices. Consequently, FDI merely focuses on the financial exchange between countries. Therefore it does not take into account the MNC as a specific type of organisation for studying employment policies and practices. This means that, besides the financial flows between countries, interdependencies between subsidiaries and headquarters and between subsidiaries in more than one country need to be added to select MNCs for investigating the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1990).

Several researchers have classified interdependencies or interlink ages between subsidiaries and headquarters (for an overview, see Dunning & Lundan, 2008). Ghoshal and Nohria (1989) are worth mentioning in this respect. They assume that the relation between headquarters and subsidiaries is characterised by both independence and interdependence, the latter being a core characteristic of MNCs. More specifically, interdependency can occur between headquarters and subsidiaries, but also between subsidiaries, i.e. if a particular subsidiary supplies another one. The nature of these interdependencies relates to a company's internal (e.g. performance, available resources) and external factors (e.g. location, competitors). Accordingly, an MNC for our study on employment policies and practices will be described as an organisation in which employment policies and practices are transferred between economically interlinked activities. The latter refers to the multiple sources of authority with which MNCs are confronted (Aharoni & Brock, 2010; Hoos, 2000). This applies to the number of countries in which the MNC is operational, the variance between the different national contexts and the interaction between these contexts. Summarising, this means that this multi-country organisational presence and the interlink ages between operations in different countries define the MNC for the study of employment policies and practices (Westney & Zaheer, 2013).

1.3 Explaining the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs: Theoretical approaches

After having defined the core concepts, this section will give an overview of the theoretical frameworks used to explain the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Most attempts to explain the transfer of employment policies and practices incorporate some ideas of the neo-institutional approach, or integrate company specific features. In doing so, they focus on one particular dimension of the transfer: the neo-institutionalist approach most frequently focuses on control, centralisation and discretion. Organisational characteristics merely study headquarters-subsidiary configurations (for an overview, see table 17 in appendix). The most frequently applied theoretical frameworks are the isomorphic forces of institutions, the transaction cost economics, the business system approach and the resource-based approach (table 2). The use of these theoretical frameworks for the study on transfer is described in the next paragraphs.

Table 2 Overview of theoretical perspectives

	Neo-institutionalism- control/centralisation/discretion	Organisational- headquarters- subsidiary configuration
Convergence	Isomorphism (1) Dominance effect	Transaction cost economics
	Isomorphism (2) Best practices	
Divergence	Business system approach	Resource-based view

Source own processing

1.3.1 Pressure for convergence and global integration

Within theoretical frameworks explaining convergence, isomorphic forces and the transaction cost economics are most frequently used. Core to the idea of isomorphism, is that institutional environments structure companies' behaviour. The way these isomorphic forces shape companies' behaviour, is described by referring to the notion of the organisational field of Di Maggio and Powell (Tempel & Walgenbach, 2007). Specifically, an organisational field is defined as an area in which a particular institutional domain like employment is reproduced by social actors through three types of isomorphism: coercive (resulting from pressure of other social actors within the field), mimetic (in case of uncertainty, resulting in copying other social actors) and normative isomorphism (resulting from common patterns of thought). Accordingly, for studies on the transfer, it is expected that MNCs operating in the same environment, adopt similar employment policies and practices (Edwards et al., 2013; Ferner & Quintanilla, 1998; Kostova & Roth, 2002).

Based on this idea of the organisational field, two perspectives have been developed to explain the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. The dominance perspective first of all states that dominant or hegemonic countries exert employment policies that are adopted across countries. In other words, companies compare themselves with a set of companies of a particular home country, and borrow or learn from these countries (Almond et al., 2005; Pudelko & Harzing, 2007). Important in this regard is that what is considered as dominant, changes over time (Almond et al., 2005). Furthermore, the national level is not the only level found to represent a dominance effect. Royle and Ortiz (2009) observed sector and firm specific dominance effects to exist as well. A second approach based on isomorphic forces, is the universalist or system approach (Edwards et al., 2013; Geppert & Williams, 2006). This perspective assumes some employment policies and practices to be transferred to all subsidiaries worldwide independent of the industry, size or country (Lerxtundi & Landeta, 2012). Put differently, there are methods and approaches considered to be the best to adopt, across different home and host countries. However, best practices are only applicable from an actor's point of view. This means that, what is put forward as best practice, depends on the strategy of the MNCs, for example the extent of internationalisation (Tüsselmann, Allen, Barrett, & McDonald, 2008). Accordingly, it might be expected that MNCs looking for local legitimation (low degree of internationalisation) or MNCs looking for global integration (more internationalised industries) respectively go along with different types of isomorphism (Birkinshaw & Morrison, 1995; Tüsselmann et al., 2008).

The pressure to converge worldwide has been found to relate to the asset specificity, the frequency and the uncertainty to set up employment policies and practices as well (Teece, 1986; Williamson, 1992; 2010). Particularly, if an MNC headquarters has made a lot of investments to develop a particular employment practice or policy, it will be likely to distribute it among its subsidiaries (Edwards, 2011). Furthermore when there is frequent contact between headquarters and subsidiaries, and a high uncertainty regarding subsidiary's efficacy in setting up the employment policies and practices, it is likely that the headquarters will maintain control (Ghoshal & Nohria, 1989). Thus, generally, transaction cost economics predict that the higher the transaction cost, the more MNCs tend to develop employment policies and practices at the headquarters' level and tend to transfer them to the subsidiaries (Kirca et al., 2011). These interpretations of subsidiaries' role however, have been found too narrow within previous studies based on the idea of isomorphism or transaction costs. Particularly, these approaches do not consider the specific local environment subsidiaries are operating in (Barney, 2001). In addition, it cannot explain why employment policies and practices are organised differently in subsidiaries with similar transaction costs (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989; 1990). This is where the business system and the resource-based view come into play.

1.3.2 Pressure for divergence and local adaptation

1.3.2.1 Pressure for divergence and local adaptation: Cross-national differences

Contrary to the dominant and universalist perspective, the business system approach (in the remainder referred to as BS) explains the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs by focusing on differences in institutional contexts. In order to capture the full diversity in institutional settings, the BS approach goes beyond the ideal typical varieties of capitalism (Hall & Thelen, 2009) and the cultural approach² (Liu, 2004; Tempel & Welgenbach, 2007) because of their rather static character (McGraw, 2004; Saka, 2002). Specifically, the BS approach opposes the idea of increasing convergence, as differences between national systems are observed to cause different employment policies and practices (Pudelko & Harzing, 2007).

Central to the BS approach is the idea that home countries, where headquarters are located, and host countries, where subsidiaries are operational, reflect different forms of capitalism that influence MNCs' behaviour. These different forms of capitalism shape strategies and competitiveness of the firms through particular systems of ownership, skill and training institutes, the organisation of the state and industrial relations (Almond & Ferner, 2006; Ferner et al., 2004; Quintanilla et al., 2008; Marginson et al., 2010). Looking at the relation between MNCs and these institutions, two assumptions are central in this approach: first, the behaviour of companies is shaped by the economic rules of the institutional contexts in which they are located and by the interactions between companies and these institutions (Morgan, 2007). Second, these contexts compose of different complementary institutions that favour the competitive advantage of companies. As a consequence, specific dynamic ways of organising the economic activity arise and companies' behaviour is embedded in social, economic and political institutions (Almond et al., 2005; Edwards & Kuruwila, 2005). Based on the differences in social, economic and political institutions, UK, Irish and US home and host countries are considered as having more individual employment policies like individual performance related pay and training focusing on human capital accumulation (Parry, Dickmann, & Morley, 2008). Countries like Belgium and the Scandinavian countries leave less room for organisational autonomy because vocational training and the collaborative relationship between actors in the private sector are highly regulated by stable and secure positions of employment institutions and governments (Muller, 1998; Wever, 1995).

² The VoC approach clusters companies based on a dichotomy between liberal and coordinated countries. The cultural approach labels countries based on the 6D-model of Hofstede's (pragmatism, indulgence, power distance, individualism, masculinity and uncertainty distance). The 6D- model clusters countries at one moment without integrating changes on these dimensions.

The above mentioned theoretical perspectives are reflected in hypotheses formulated. Specifically, empirical studies using the BS approach agree on three propositions regarding the influence of national business systems. First of all, a considerable amount of literature has found a home country or country of origin effect on the transfer to be mediated by the host country effect (for an overview see table 17 in appendix). Muller (1998) for example investigated the way HR and IR are organised in UK and US MNCs and found evidence for the country of origin. Specifically, US companies tried to go beyond the system of collective bargaining, because this allows more flexibility (home country effect): pay and performance schemes, not guaranteeing a minimum increase in wage were implemented, particularly within the absence of works councils (host country effect). Next to this, a number of researchers have reported a complementary effect between home and host countries. Tüßelmann et al. (2002) found that German MNCs transferred the idea of works councils and employee information and consultation to the UK subsidiaries. MNCs however, complement this by engaging in direct forms of participation. Similarly, McDonald et al. (2003) showed that subsidiaries of more regulated home countries integrate more progressive practices of Anglo-Saxon headquarters in a flexible collective approach (McDonald et al., 2003). Finally, the home and host country effect and their interaction depends on the employment practice studied. Parry et al. (2008) for example, showed that the host country effect is present for trade union recognition and consultation contrary to other policies like diversity management.

1.3.2.2 Pressure for divergence and local adaptation: within company variation

The country specific context as described above can also indirectly increase divergence between companies by offering location advantages or specific regulations on the company level (Meyer et al., 2011). The former refers, for example, to the presence of development agencies giving financial advice and support or training infrastructure (external resources). The latter refers, for example, to the required presence of a works council or union representative at the subsidiary level (internal resources) as part of the system of industrial relations. Based on this, the transfer of employment policies and practices is expected to vary according to subsidiaries' actors making use of external and internal resources to inhibit the transfer. Both will be described in the next paragraphs.

1.3.2.2.1 Within company variation: External resources - Location advantages

The idea of varying external location advantages or resources is built on the observation that MNCs are operational in different local contexts. In addition, MNCs are not merely considered as vertically integrated companies. MNCs can also be seen as a network of dispersed subsidiaries, each having

access to specific resources (Malnight, 2001; Rugman & Verbeke, 2001). Furthermore, not all subsidiaries carry out all the value adding activities of the MNC. As such subsidiaries have other competences and resource configurations (Holtbrügge & Möhr, 2011). The concept of resources, following the literature, refers to valuable (used to exploit opportunities and neutralise threats in the environment), rare (limited in supply and not equally distributed among firms), inimitable (cannot be replicated by other companies due to social embeddedness or path dependency) and non-substitutable sources (cannot be replaced by another) that are of importance for companies' competitive advantage (Lockett, Thompson, & Morgenstern, 2009; Newbert, 2008; Wernerfelt, 1984).

For the transfer in MNCs, the resource-based view expects the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs to be the result of resources subsidiaries have access to (for an overview see table 17 in appendix). Isolating or resource position barriers take a central position in explaining the transfer (Tallman, 1992). Specifically, local subsidiary's role can change because the subsidiary has the potential to interpret the needs of the local market or can overcome barriers to access competitive resources (Ferner, 2000). Put differently, headquarters change subsidiary's role or give subsidiary discretion in order to access important resources. However, the position of a particular subsidiary will not only be determined by the level of resources available to the subsidiary but also by the nature of the resource. Rugman and Verbeke (2001) distinguish between location and non-location bound resources. Depending hereon, resources are respectively (not) easily transferable between subsidiaries and to the headquarters. The location bound resource are indicated by Castellani and Zanfei (2002) as listening post because subsidiaries can accumulate knowledge in foreign markets. On the contrary, if local resources have the potential to be reverse diffused (non-location bound), more control is assumed to be observed (Edwards & Tempel, 2010).

1.3.2.2.2 Within company variation: Internal resources

Similar to external resources, internal resources can also inhibit the transfer when subsidiaries' actors rely on them. An illustrative example in this regard is the competitive position of the subsidiary within the overall MNC. This competitive position refers to the strategic role of the subsidiary: do subsidiaries serve local or global markets (Fenton O-Creevy, Gooderham, & Nordhaug, 2008)? The subsidiaries' relative performance, compared to other subsidiaries of the same MNCs or within the same business division (Bouquet & Birkinshaw, 2006) should be taken into account as well. Specifically, greater subsidiary performance within the MNC provides trade unions and managers at the subsidiary level with higher bargaining even in the situation where the headquarters' aim is to set up a centralised employment policy (Geppert & Williams, 2006; Liu, 2004). In addition, the presence of union representatives and high union density on the work floor affects the transfer. Empirical

studies indeed found union density or representation causing MNCs to take into consideration unions' interests. Consequently, the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs was inhibited (Fenton O-Greevy et al., 2008). So internal and external resources offer subsidiaries possibilities to inhibit the transfer.

Some researchers, however, point at the weak position of the influence of internal and external resources on the transfer, as headquarters will easily counterbalance this bargaining position (Dörrenbächer & Gammelgaard, 2011). In this regard, Ferner et al. (2004) found some indication of the limited role of local managers as interpreters of the institutional environment. By having access or information that was not available for headquarters, local managers opposed centrally organised employment policies and practices. However, headquarters could find a counterstrategy in installing expats on the subsidiary level in order to block local managers' resistance (Edwards, Rees, & Coller, 1999). In addition, the position of the subsidiary within the value chain cannot always be used in terms of bargaining. After all, in the majority of cases, the structure of the value chain has been set up by the headquarters, or other subsidiaries execute similar tasks (Anderson, Forgsgrén & Holm, 2007). What remains important for the subsidiary's bargaining position however, are factors like market access, market knowledge and membership in innovative networks. Put differently, factors contributing to the performance of the company can make the headquarters dependent on the subsidiaries. This way, the subsidiary and the social actors within it, strengthen their position because local subsidiaries are considered to be interpreters of the local market (Ferner et al., 2004).

1.4 Explaining the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs: Gaps in knowledge

Based on the theoretical frameworks presented above, it can be stated that current empirical studies consider the institutional environment and resources as structuring the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs (for an overview see table 17 in appendix). However, independent of the framework used, a first criticism in a lot of the literature on the transfer, is the focus on the national level only (Almond, 2011; Morgan, 2007). This focus is argued because of following reasons: 1) the state is responsible for public order, 2) it sets up rules regarding private ownership and the financial system, 3) the state organises different interest groups and 4) it is responsible for skill development (Morgan, 2007; Whitley, 2000). Accordingly, less attention has been devoted to the policies at sub-national levels. In addition, it has been observed that subsidiaries' social actors (employees and employers and their representative organisations) use different external and internal resources to foster or inhibit the transfer (Geppert & Williams, 2006; Saka-Helmout & Geppert, 2011). Conceptualising the way social actors within MNCs use these resources however, is missing (Morgan, 2007).

Specifically, within the business system approach, the national level is seen as creating alternative paths for organising business (Geppert & Williams, 2006). So if other systems are observed, like regional governments, sectors or webs of inter-firm relations, national specific systems cause them to do so (Whitley, 2000). Considering the national level as the most important one is not a problem. However, empirical studies using the BS approach have neglected differences at the regional and inter-firm level, causing other employment policies to emerge. Studies to date do not allow capturing policies at sub-national levels as they have focused on the host country as internally homogenous (Morgan, 2007). In addition, according to Whitley, the role and the action of the actors result from variation in the conventions and rules of the game established by dominant institutions (capital and labour) (Whitley, 2000). From this standpoint, companies and other actors are considered as over-determined by their institutional environment, leaving little scope for local autonomy. This strong determinism is confirmed in Whitley's notion of institutional complementarities. By this, Whitley suggests that over time, relationships between firms and their institutional context, that do not have the complementary effect, gradually fade away. This because these companies cannot compete against firms benefitting from this advantage (Morgan, 2007). In doing so, this functionalist notion of complementarity only considers employment policies at reinforcing sub-national levels. It hereby neglects the possibility that one level can also make up for the deficiencies of another one. In addition, what is seen as complementary varies among different social actors (employees, employers and their representative organisations) as well (Deeg, 2009; Deeg & Jackson, 2007). This means that there are two forms of complementarity that need to be taken into account for every social actor: 1) supplementary in which a particular level compensates for the deficiencies of another one and 2) synergy referring to the mutually reinforcing effect of compatible levels (Deeg, 2009; Deeg & Jackson, 2007). The current use of the BS approach in empirical studies fails to consider and conceptualise firms as dynamic actors that pursue their goals within and across compensating or reinforcing settings (Amable, 2000; Amable & Palombarini, 2009; Dunning & Lundan, 2010).

Similar comments have been addressed to the use of the dominant and universalist perspective and the resource-based view. For the former, coercive, mimetic or normative pressure, causing companies to adopt common practices or structures, are expected to increase their legitimacy (Cantwell et al., 2010; Saka-Helmout & Geppert, 2011). However, when considering these different effects, it should be noted that the pressure for international integration reflects to a great extent the agency of some powerful actors. Specifically, a global managerial elite, as Ferner et al. (2012) state, set the standards for global institution building. In this process of institutional building, MNCs have been key players by shaping an international economic activity. In addition, as described earlier, what is considered as best practice depends on the actors' strategy (Tüßelman et al., 2008). The second perspective, the resource-based view, considers host country advantages without addressing differences in location advantages within the country. Crouch et al. (2009) however, found that national countries are no

longer the main distinctive borders for location advantages. Rather, intermediate structures like the web of inter-firm relations and the regional governments and their supporting regional development agencies gain importance. Particularly, these levels foresee in location advantages like initiatives facilitating learning between companies, collective goods like qualified employees, cooperative labour relations with employees and a reliable infrastructure (Heidenreich, 2012).

To conclude, empirical studies on the transfer of employment practices and policies in MNCs' subsidiaries have too often overlooked the ability of subsidiaries' social actors (employees and employers and their representative organisations) to shape policies at different levels (Ferner et al., 2012). Specifically, a systematic integration of all relevant employment policies at sub-national levels and a clear conceptualisation of subsidiaries' social actors as active agents is missing. This limited attention devoted to the integration of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels and social actors is surprising, as some studies found evidence for a dual track approach (Cantwell et al., 2010; Marginson et al., 2010): subsidiaries were found to copy the practices from their country of origin, but only use the ones that fit within the sub-national environment and adapt the host country by integrating particular types of employment. This active role of social actors within MNCs and the increasing relevance of policies at sub-national levels are furthermore reinforced by MNCs' nature. That is, MNCs' operations are indeed less influenced or bounded by norms and values of one specific environment. A more likely key to their nature are the fragmented circumstances with which they are confronted (Koene & Ansari, 2011; Léonard, Pulignano, Lamare, & Edwards, 2014;). These different settings can be contradicting or conflicting (Saka-Helmout & Geppert, 2011). This way, MNCs are key players in making linkages between rules, norms and values between policy levels, rather than assuming that there is a functionalist fit between them. In addition, other social actors, like SMEs, expect subsidiaries' social actors to engage in constructing the environment. Indeed MNCs' subsidiaries are valued for their capacity to show experimental behaviour and not for engaging in conforming existing policies (Cantwell et al., 2010). In doing so, subsidiaries are key actors not only able to transfer from one environment to another one but also to shape or construct new employment policies (Koene & Ansari, 2011; Kristensen & Morgan, 2007). Based on this, social actors and policies at multiple sub-national levels are integrated in the study. With regard to this, the central research proposition will be formulated in the next paragraph. After that, the relevant employment policies at sub-national levels will be described and propositions regarding the role of social actors and these policies will be formulated.

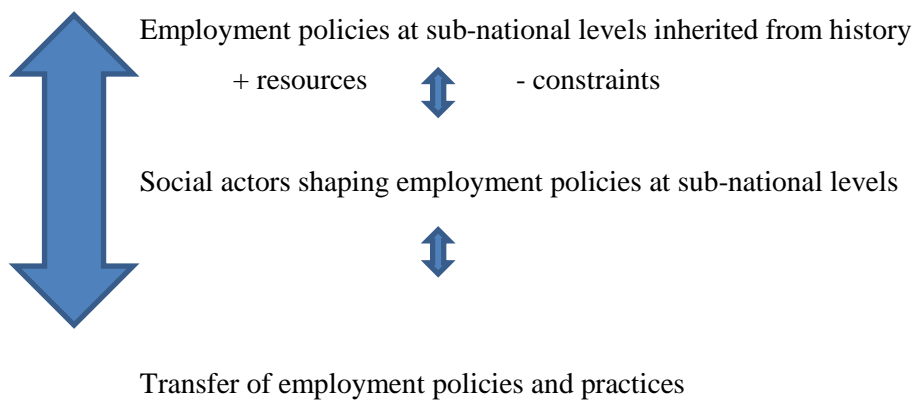
1.5 Filling the gaps: research focus

Based on the gaps in knowledge identified above, employment policies at multiple sub-national levels and the active role of MNCs' social actors (employees and employers and their representative organisations) are of particular interest to integrate into the study on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Some previous studies have considered employment policies at sub-national levels, although indirectly (not main research focus), partially (employment policy at one sub-national level) or the dimensions of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels for the study of the transfer have only been theoretically identified. Regarding the former, case study research on US MNCs for example, found that an organisation active at sub-national levels contributed to subsidiaries' discretion because they foresaw in external vocational training (the Chamber of Commerce and Industry) (Almond et al., 2005; Muller, 1998;). Similarly, Tayeb (1998) found Scottish regional governments to be responsible for local adaptation. For the partial investigation of the sub-national level, Bélanger et al.(2013) focussed on the inter-firm level. They found that if subsidiaries are strongly locally integrated, meaning that they are part of local industry forums and take part in local employer associations' activities, discretion is higher. Considering the role of subsidiaries' social actors, Crouch et al. (2009) found employment policies on the inter-firm level to deviate from national ones because of the interventions of social actors. Specifically, alternative policies were obtained by bypassing rigid national German regulations through contacts with universities or other R&D institutes. Consequently, other policies arise by compensating one level by the other. Similar cases reveal an innovative combination between national and sub-national levels because of the strongly networked sub-national policies (Crouch et al., 2009). This appears to be the case where national policies cannot provide in specific resources for a group of companies. Within these limited studies on the transfer and active involvement of social actors, researchers did however not distinguish between different relevant sub-national policies like regional employment policies and inter-firm employment policies to study the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries (Lane & Wood, 2009). Only Almond (2011) theoretically distinguished four relevant spheres (sphere of the state, financial sphere, skill system and trust relations) to be studied when integrating employment policies at multiple sub-national levels into the study on the transfer. Therefore, when combining these pieces of literature, it can be concluded that subsidiaries' social actors contribute to employment policies at multiple sub-national levels, that these employment policies at sub-national levels influence the transfer and that there is more than one relevant policy at sub-national levels when studying employment policies and practices in MNCs. Therefore, the following main proposition is formulated:

Main proposition: Subsidiaries' social actors mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels

This proposition fits with the idea of the duality of structure in which subsidiaries' social actors (employees and employers and their representative organisations) on the one hand contribute to employment policies at sub-national levels, and on the other hand use these policies at sub-national levels to mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices within MNCs' subsidiaries (Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005) (figure 5). This way, as Crouch et al. (2009) states, trade unions and managers within MNCs' subsidiaries are not only rule takers from national levels but also rule makers of policies at the sub-national levels; as such, creative coherences appear.

Figure 5 Illustration of the conceptual framework



Source own processing based on Amable (2000)

To investigate the above mentioned proposition, the following paragraphs will first of all distinguish between relevant employment policies at sub-national levels and how these policies evolve over time (gap 1). Thereafter, two propositions will be formulated regarding how social actors are expected to shape employment policies at sub-national levels and how these employment policies at sub-national levels are expected to mediate the transfer (gap 2). In doing so, existing literature on the role of social actors and on employment policies at sub-national levels will be integrated into the literature on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs.

1.6 Filling the gap (1): what are the relevant employment policies at multiple sub-national levels for the study on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs

Taken the central proposition into account, the study focuses on employment policies at sub-national levels that can fulfil two criteria. First of all, they potentially offer resources to subsidiaries' social actors to shape these policies (Ferner et al., 2012). Second, these policies can be used as resources by subsidiaries' social actors to foster or inhibit the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries.

1.6.1 Defining employment policies at sub-national levels

A generally accepted definition of employment policies at sub-national levels in the literature on within country variation is missing. Two types of employment policies at the sub-national level however, are often distinguished: the regional employment policy and inter-firm level employment policy (Amable, 2000; Lane & Wood, 2009). Almond (2011) interprets four policy domains or spheres on these levels as possibly relevant when studying the sub-national levels and employment policies (Almond, 2011). First of all, he distinguishes between the sphere of the state, where the increasing importance of multi-level governance as well as the prevalence of regional development agencies is highlighted. Thereafter, he emphasises the financial system, focusing on differences in the way companies are supported financially or by other means like infrastructure or R&D. Thirdly, the way skill development is organised, should be considered as well, since this sphere is assumed to be much more sensitive to regional or local market demands. Finally, trust relations are also central to the analysis of employment policies at sub-national levels. This is because the way trust relations are set up and maintained, mainly take place at sub-national levels. Merging employment policies at the regional and inter-firm level with these spheres results in two types of policies: regional employment policies and inter-firm employment policies. These respectively encompass the sphere of the state, a skill system and a financial system, and the sphere of trust relations and a skill system (table 3). Following paragraphs will explain both types of policies.

Table 3 Employment policies at sub-national levels

	Sphere of the state	Financial sphere	Skill development	Trust relations
Regional level	x	x	x	
Inter-firm level			x	x

Regional employment policies. Regional employment policies are defined as formal constitutions or a number of regulations applicable in a particular area or territory (Lane & Wood, 2009). Quite frequently these policies are considered as part of a political construction which is closely connected to national politics (Trigilia, 1991). Particularly, it refers to an intermediate regulatory level between the national (e.g. federal state) and the local level (e.g. provinces and municipalities). In this regard, regional employment policies add to the national level as they aim to fund a particular level of economic development for a single region. In addition, regional employment policies support regional labour markets and specific systems of skill development (Halkier & Danson, 1997). Different regional employment policies are then distinguished based on the demarcation of regional boundaries (Hudson, 2007). After all, if policies are part of a political construction, the territory over which government is executed, should be defined (Hudson, 2007). Furthermore, as regional policies have been set up differently between regions, the socio-economic profile is expected to diverge because other regional coalitions put other priorities. This is particularly the case when regional policies represent regional interest groups or identities like employers (organisations) or trade unions (Trigilia, 1991). Consequently, supportive regional employment policies like training and education programs and research and development policies can increase an uneven development between regions (Lane & Wood, 2009; Phelps, 2002; Trigilia, 1991).

Employment policies at the inter-firm level. Employment policies at the inter-firm level are understood as specific employment policies for an informal constitution. Among regional scholars, this informal constitution was initially labelled as policies in industrial districts. In its original form, they were referred to as ‘sector specialised agglomerations of small and medium-sized enterprises’ (Pyke & Sengenbenger, 1992; Zeitlin, 2008). Similar concepts pointing to the same configurations are local production systems, regional economies or territorial clusters (Asheim & Coenen, 2006; Crouch et al., 2009). Growth and development within these configurations are obtained internally by employment policies fostering differentiation and specialisation (You & Wilkinson, 1994). This is made possible through the combination of coordination and competition between local firms. To sustain this combination, cooperation and trust were installed based on tacit knowledge and informal social norms (Chetty & Agndal, 2008). As a result a high level of innovation as well as an adaptive capacity to changing environments were noticed, anticipated by the human capital and skill specialisation of employees (Del Ottati, 2002).

1.6.2 Changing employment policies at sub-national levels

The regional employment policies as well as the inter-firm employment policies did, however, evolve over time. Particularly, regional employment policies have become more and more distinctive forms next to the national level. They foresee in initiatives for economic development, but also in a wide range of services like labour skills, infrastructure and information (Cognard, 2011; Phelps, 2000; Pyke & Sengenberger, 1992). According to Phelps, MacKinnon, Stone, and Braidford (2003), regional employment policies are nowadays particular governmental institutions aiming to expand economic possibilities. Moreover, these policies seek new employment opportunities for existing or newly arising clusters of firms. In practice, this not only refers to policies (legal and regulatory framework) supporting growth, but also to bringing different interest groups together (Trigilia, 1991; Huggings, 1997). These regional policies are furthermore sustained by regional development agencies. The latter are semi-autonomous regional bodies that set up initiatives like giving advice, from which companies can benefit (Halkier & Danson, 1997; Phelps et al., 2003).

Employment policies at the inter-firm level as defined in its original form, were also challenged because more open and dynamic configurations have been observed (Beccatini, 2002; Zeitlin, 2008). In addition, the composition has changed as MNCs are also gaining access to this inter-firm level (Chiavesio, Di Maria, & Micelli, 2010). Central to these employment policies on the inter-firm level remain, however, the prevalence of trust and cooperation and the proximity of other companies. Trust is hereby no longer obtained by informal social norms and local tacit knowledge (Chetty & Agndal, 2008; Zeitlin, 2004). Rather, collective services for training or finance, that go beyond the interests of the individual firm, are able to install trust and cooperation (Huggins, 1997; Ter Wal & Boschma, 2009; Zeitlin, 2008). Secondly, proximity continues to be important for companies because it decreases companies' access costs to local resources. Specifically, although interactions on the inter-firm level are nowadays more formalised, based on current ICT possibilities, the diffusion of interesting employment policies and practices most frequently happens when entrepreneurs are near (Molina-Morales & Martinez-Fernandez, 2004, 2008). In addition, access to sub-national services is important since they function as intermediary agents. Particularly, close access reduces the cost of looking for new ideas, knowledge or other relevant information (Coro & Grandinetti, 2001; Molina-Morales & Martinez-Fernandez, 2004, 2008; Pyke & Sengenberger, 1992). As a consequence, insider companies still benefit from the competitive advantage provided by policies at sub-national levels whereas this is not the case for outsider companies (Steiner & Ploder, 2008). These supportive inter-firm policies are particularly important for employment, as this is the least mobile production factor within companies (Meyer et al., 2011; Ter Wal & Boschma, 2009).

The next question that logically arises, is how the above mentioned changes in employment policies at sub-national levels have occurred. Following the literature as described above, subsidiaries' social actors are key actors in shaping these levels because of their presence in different contexts. Put differently, subsidiaries' social actors are used to align multiple settings (Koene & Ansari, 2011; Saka-Helmout & Geppert, 2011). In this respect, current employment policies at sub-national levels do not merely exist because of a functionalist fit, but are brought together by social actors (employers and employees and their representative organisations). Accordingly, the evolution of employment policies at sub-national levels can occur for all policies simultaneously, because MNCs' subsidiary can be nested at a range of levels (Lane & Wood, 2009) as they are operating in a given regional government and belong to a particular inter-firm level. The following step is to conceptualise when subsidiaries' social actors (employees and employers and their representative organisations) shape both regional and inter-firm employment policies.

1.7 Filling the gap (2): the role of social actors

1.7.1 How social actors are expected to shape employment policies at sub-national levels

The theoretical starting point to answer this question is the implicit use of neo-institutionalist analysis that embodies the abstract underlying principles of social structure and action. A significant discussion in mainstream social science is that change can be produced by endogenous social actors operating within different path-dependent systems (Crouch & Farrell, 2004; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). In particular, contributing to this stream of literature, Crouch (2005) argues that actors at the subsidiary level respond to pressures for change from the external environment by engaging in experimental behaviour. This leads to several combinations of employment policies, rather than to the mere adaptation of a single logic that macro-level structures usually aim to dictate. Crouch uses the term 'institutional entrepreneurship' to describe this process of combination rather than adaptation to the national logic (Crouch, 2005). Accordingly, employment policies at sub-national levels and actors are seen as active and dynamic agents of change. Moreover, subsidiaries' social actors are considered as central in explaining reform and transformation in the policies shaped by their contribution. As Lange (2009) clearly points out, this opposes traditional assumptions claiming that comparative advantages are the result of the operation of national policies only. By contrast, she argues that the high level of strategic leeway for companies should be considered crucial in explaining national economic performance. Thus, other policies should be in place, which would help to explain the different levels of competitive advantage among (and within) national economies.

Assuming social actors to engage in their environment when the latter is not in accordance with their goals however, is not sufficient to capture social actors' engagement (Ferner et al., 2012; Saka-

Helmout & Geppert, 2011). Resources are needed to engage in these policies and can be present in- and external to subsidiaries' social actors (Ferner et al., 2012). Specifically, local governance networks, or more generally, sub-national involvement can make resources available for shaping employment policies at sub-national levels. Moreover, having influence on sub-national authorities or development agencies allows social actors to shape these employment policies at sub-national levels (Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005; Ferner et al., 2012). However, these resources are not necessarily equally divided among social actors (in our case employees and employers) (Dörrenbächer & Becker-Ritterspäch, 2008; Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005; Pulignano & Keune, in press). Consequently, social actors' bargaining positions might differ and a micro-political space is being created (Léonard et al., 2014). This means that not only social actors shape policies at sub-national levels that are not in line with their aims. The division of resources among social actors also needs to be added. Put differently, the resources to engage in policies divide how the bargaining space among social actors is divided (Holmes, Miller, Hitt, & Salmador, 2013).

Both the regional and the inter-firm level have been observed to consist of resources for social actors' engagement (Almond et al., 2014; Ferner et al., 2012). These resources can be institutional resources, like systems of consultation and codetermination, or firm specific resources like lobbying possibilities or resources from local production networks (Ferner et al., 2012; Pulignano & Keune, in press). The availability of these resources on different levels (national, sub-national or company level) or within different domains (state, finance, skill development and trust relations) (Dörrenbächer & Becker-Ritterspäch, 2008; Ferner et al., 2013) is what Saka-Helmout and Geppert (2011) call supportive structures. These structures enable social actors to shape or engage in experimental behaviour (Kristensen & Morgan 2007). Accordingly, subsidiaries' social actors are expected to intervene in the processes of setting up employment policies at sub-national levels if they have the resources to do so (Kristensen & Morgan, 2012). As such, the more key resources social actors obtain and the more they have the ability to shape employment policies at sub-national levels, the more their interests are reflected in these policies (Dörrenbächer & Becker-Ritterspäch, 2008).

As the study focuses on employment policies at sub-national levels, it claims that the absence of resources at one level not necessarily results in a limited engagement of social actors. Specifically, by moving beyond the functionalist notion of complementarity as stated before, resources foreseen by one employment policy, can be reinforcing and compensating for another level (Deeg & Jackson, 2007; Deeg, 2009). Furthermore, complementarity should be considered from an actor's perspective, meaning that whether employment policies at sub-national levels contribute to or complement actors' aims will vary between social actors. Sub-national engagement for social actors within MNCs is also considered as a strategic option. It does not necessarily occur for every social actor within the MNC (Crouch et al., 2009; Heidenreich, 2012). Therefore, different objectives or strategies of subsidiaries'

social actors need to be taken into account. Michelsons (1989) indeed found that social actors will only engage in inter-firm levels if core values like innovation can be introduced within the web of inter-firm relations. Similarly Kristensen and Morgan (2007) found engagement to depend on the presence of a fit between resources (strong and weak institutions) and the orientation (long or short term) of subsidiaries. Based on this, the following proposition is formulated:

Sub - proposition 1: Social actors shape employment policies at multiple sub-national levels if there are resources to shape these policies in line with their aims

Different degrees of engagement or entrepreneurship then are the result of available resources at more than one level. Cantwell et al. (2010) distinguishes between institutional avoidance, institutional adaptation and institutional co-evolution or institutional entrepreneurship. The first two forms are here not considered as variants of institutional entrepreneurship because of the lack of active involvement of social actors within MNCs. After all, in the case of co-evolution of institutional entrepreneurship, social actors engage in standard-setting processes, forms and content of political processes on different levels or within different domains. Co-evolution, however, also occurs in two dimensions. Saka-Helmout and Geppert (2011) distinguish between transformation (radical change) and deinstitutionalisation (gradual change). Processes underlying the degree of co-evolution or institutional entrepreneurship can accordingly be described as challenging policies or complementing existing ones. In the former subsidiaries' social actors change the employment policies by addressing a different interpretation of rules and practices, briefly described as a process of reinterpretation (Hall & Thelen, 2009). For the latter, incremental change is expected to be much more present than punctuated change. This type of change is expected to occur over longer periods of time with some changes at specific reference points in time (Kristensen & Morgan, 2012).

The result of both types of co-evolution or institutional entrepreneurship is the same: adapted or newly created employment policies. The latter are once again considered as resources, but in two different ways. First of all, these policies on the regional and inter-firm level in turn are expected to deliver resources to engage in employment policies at sub-national levels. As a consequence, a close interaction between these policies and social actors takes place over time. Second, these policies are expected to be used as resources to mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices within MNCs' subsidiaries. Specifically, social actors use employment policies at sub-national levels shaped in line with their aims, in order to inhibit the transfer. The mediating effect is expected to occur by institutional and firm-specific resources. First of all, institutional resources like codetermination rights contribute to employment policies that need to be implemented at the subsidiary level and in this way, the transfer of employment policies and practices is mediated. Second, firm-specific resources like access to local production networks, will mediate the transfer since subsidiaries' social actors

guarantee the access to these policies (Bélanger et al., 2013). Mediation through these two resources will particularly be the case when employment policies at these sub-national levels contribute to the competitive advantage of MNCs (Deeg, 2009). However, contributing to MNCs' aims for the subsidiary under study is not guaranteed, since the goals might differ between subsidiaries' social actors and headquarters. This can happen because trade unions try to align these policies to their goals by using a system of collective bargaining based on parity. In addition, former studies have found conflictual aims between headquarters and subsidiaries (Ferner et al., 2004; Ferner et al., 2012). In other words, subsidiaries' social actors shape employment policies at sub-national levels in line with their aims but these policies are not automatically in line with the goals of the headquarters. Therefore, the next paragraph will deal with how employment policies at sub-national levels are expected to affect the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries.

1.7.2 How employment policies at sub-national levels are expected to affect the transfer within MNCs

Regional employment policies and employment policies at the inter-firm level have indeed been observed as resources for subsidiaries' social actors to mediate the transfer because of their competitive advantage. Particularly for the regional government, a delegation of employment related responsibilities to the regional government has come about in the last decennium (Cognard, 2011). In addition, regional development agencies have become real governance mechanisms next to the national level. This means that regional employment policies should not only be considered as supportive mechanisms for economic development. They rather offer a wide range of services and infrastructure for companies within the field of employment (Phelps et al., 2003). Accordingly, differences between regional agencies can result in different advantages for MNCs. This is particularly the case when regional agencies are funded by regional governments in a federal state. In this case, these agencies represent the interests of the regional coalition and potentially emphasise different priorities than other regional governments (Halkier & Danson, 1997). Headquarters can then access these competitive different resources and advantages through the local subsidiary. Specifically, as earlier stated, the role of the subsidiary potentially changes when they have access to valuable resources like the market and innovative networks (Bélanger et al., 2013; Ferner et al., 2004). Therefore, when integrating these findings in the literature on institutional entrepreneurship, regional government policies are expected to mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices within MNCs' subsidiaries if they are seen as competitive by the headquarters and when subsidiaries' social actors know how to benefit from the policies they shaped.

Similarly, employment policies at the inter-firm level can provide with location advantages like shared information, shared knowledge and participation in institutions (Molina-Moralez & Martinez-Fernandez, 2008; Zeitlin, 2004). Shared information relates to information regarding products and processes as well as to human or technological resources. The second form refers to the availability of a skilled or specialised workforce. As most of the companies' activities are interrelated (suppliers), knowledge sharing is highly important for companies' competitive advantage (Jun & Shuai, 2012). This knowledge sharing is made feasible particularly when there is a high extent of HR mobility between companies. This means that employees, managers and technicians are employed by several companies during a given period of time (Hervas-Oliver & Albors-Garrigos 2007). The last location advantage has to do with the participation in local institutions. Formal networks like representative organisations (chambers of commerce and universities) can offer a number of initiatives or give support according to the company's needs. Furthermore, as these inter-firm institutions are in contact with a large number of companies, the services delivered can be organised at a low cost. It is hereby assumed that, if MNCs' subsidiary uses these collective resources, it may affect the company's strategy because it can take advantage of this and non-members cannot do this (Molina-Moralez & Martinez-Fernandez, 2008; Zeitlin, 2004). Therefore, it is expected that the transfer will be mediated as subsidiaries' social actors have access or can overcome resource barriers for competitive inter-firm employment policies they contributed too (Ferner, 2000).

Furthermore, complementarity between employment policies at sub-national levels is also expected to explain the transfer. Holmes et al. (2013) for example, illustrates the way different policies at sub-national levels are nested by referring to its importance for competitive advantages. Specifically, different policies reinforce or compensate one another within the political, financial and economic sphere in attracting MNCs. In addition, Holmes et al. (2013) point to the complementary effect between formal institutions and less formal institutions on sub-national levels, like research institutes, government agencies and universities. Following this line of thought, the study expects complementarity between employment policies at sub-national levels for the transfer as well. Therefore the second proposition is formulated as follows:

Sub-proposition 2: Employment policies at multiple sub-national levels affect the transfer of employment policies and practices within MNCs' subsidiaries

Before investigating these propositions, the second chapter of this first part will describe the research context of the thesis. Specifically, the second chapter will briefly report on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. In addition, it will illustrate Belgium to be an interesting research context to investigate the transfer within MNCs, while integrating the employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. Thereafter, the second part addresses the methodology

followed. Specifically, as no list of MNCs was available in Belgium, a first step was to construct a representative MNC population for our research goals (Chapter III). Cases could accordingly be selected based on a representative list of MNCs in Belgium. This chapter also describes the way the data collection has occurred. The analysis and reflection on the research are discussed in the second chapter of the methodology section (Chapter IV). Chapter V describes the main characteristics of the case studies. Based on this, the third part will investigate the propositions. Chapter VI will focus on how subsidiaries' social actors shape employment policies at sub-national levels. Chapter VII and VIII will investigate how employment policies at sub-national levels mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries in Belgium. A distinction between different dimensions of the transfer according to previous studies, is made (control, centralisation and discretion on the one hand and headquarters-subsidiary configuration on the other hand).

Chapter II: The research context

2.1 Introduction

The first chapter of the literature review has described the general perspectives on diverging employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Specifically, it has distinguished between theoretical perspectives focusing on the level of control, discretion and centralisation, and the ones explaining the headquarters-subsidiary configuration. For the former, the business system approach has been applied whereas the resource-based view has frequently been used to explain the latter. Independent of the dimension of the transfer studied, both dimensions of transfer are expected to depend on the nature of the employment policy or practice (Storey, 1989). Therefore, the nature of the employment policy or practice is briefly considered in this chapter. Specifically, this chapter gives more insight into how the transfer of pay and training policies and practices can differ from one another.

In addition, as the study integrates employment policies at multiple sub-national levels, this chapter will further address how these policies can support pay and training policies at subsidiary levels by using the Belgian context. Specifically, it describes employment policies beyond national borders. Furthermore, it illustrates resources at these levels that can be used by social actors in order to set up these employment policies (Crouch & Farrell, 2005). The second topic addressed in this chapter is the presence of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels in Belgium and the resources they offer social actors. In doing so, Belgium is portrayed to be an analytical context where it is possible to embed 1) macro-level studies focused on grasping the nature of sub-national variety and 2) micro-level research referring to understanding the dynamics producing specific outcomes. To discuss the nature of pay and training policies and practices and the resources in the Belgian context, the chapter will firstly describe some findings on pay and training policies and practices. Thereafter, the chapter illustrates how institutional entrepreneurship is expected to be observed in Belgium by referring to its employment policies at multiple sub-national levels and the resources available at these levels .

2.2 Pay and training policies and practices

The first section of this chapter discusses the nature of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. In doing so, it will become clear that this nature not only differs, but that the sensitiveness of pay and training policies and practices to employment policies at sub-national levels differs as well. Therefore, studies focusing specifically on pay and training policies and practices at the subsidiary level will briefly be described. These studies, making a distinction between different policies and practices instead of general employment policies, are, however, rather limited. Next to that, they merely focused on US companies in different host countries. The latter is not a problem as it

allows to keep one effect (country of origin or home country effect) constant. This way, the nature of policies and practices and the extent of local adaptation can be compared.

2.2.1 Pay policies and practices

Generally, a high level of control and centralisation have been observed for different components of a pay policy, like job grading, performance appraisals and merit pay (Almond et al., 2005). However, these tendencies, although initially intended to be formalised, need to be apt to the system of industrial relations and collective bargaining (host country effect) in most host countries. For example, in the study of Almond et al. (2005), a uniform system of job classification, performance appraisal, merit pay and forced distribution with an obligatory number of employees in the underperforming category were implemented in all subsidiaries of US MNCs. Different results however, were found in UK and German operations. In the former, a refusal to implement systems of forced distribution could only be found in small operations where site directors were not willing to label some of their employees as underperforming. In the German operations, the system needed to be fit to the host country's system of industrial relations. As a consequence, the local management set up a wage matrix for variable pay in close collaboration with the works council. Similarly, Ferner et al. (2007) found US MNCs to push strongly to control pay and to introduce performance related pay in its domestic and overseas subsidiaries. Performance related pay bound to an obligatory per centage of underperformers and leading to potential dismissal, was, however, contested by UK managers as this would eventually mean that well-performing employees were affected. In addition it could affect the UK employment law. Although US headquarters could not be convinced to adapt forced distribution, UK managers customised it during the implementing of the system. UK managers consulted HR academics to talk to managers or made use of a number of employees in the operations. The latter refer to operations with small numbers of employees, where it is harder to categorise underperformers because of the limited workforce.

In conclusion, the interpretation of pay policies by host countries and the use of their institutions by subsidiaries is important as well (Pulignano, 2006). This is more explicitly illustrated by referring to the study of Ferner and Quintanilla (2002). They found that the use of performance related pay indeed increased, but that, opposed to American operations, the criteria for performance related pay were linked to medium- or long-term profitability of the German operations as opposed to the short-term focus in US operations. Moreover, the tendency towards cost cutting, based on good or weak performance was not implemented in this way. Rather, a German way, guaranteeing job security, came up. Finally, social responsibility remained in terms of a good relation with trade unions and employee representatives.

2.2.2 Training policies and practices

Training policies (most of the time studied as part of recruitment policies) have also been found to be controlled (table 17 in appendix) when investigating the home country effect within US MNCs in other European countries. Particularly, a strong focus on standardisation and control is found for specific types of training policies or practices. That means that in other empirical studies, other dimensions of training besides vocational training have been studied (organisational learning or succession planning). For example, succession policies and programs for leadership competences have been found to be highly centralised within US MNCs (Ferner et al., 2004; Ferner et al., 2011). The way control has been obtained, however, differs from pay policies. Based on the study of McDonnell et al. (2009) specifically, it was found that, contrary to pay policies, organisational learning policies are less guided by formal policies. In addition, the effect of US country of origin has been more moderated by the host country than for pay policies. Pulignano (2006) found, for example, that the skills needed for particular positions, are monitored centrally. However, training policies have been observed to be adapted to local labour markets requirements as well. Moreover, the financial coverage of training sessions or decisions for hourly paid employees are taken at the local level. The latter should, however, be approved by headquarters, but the initiative is left to the local subsidiary. This is particularly the case when trade unions within the subsidiary make use of the strategic position of the subsidiary. Similarly, Muller (1998) found that the presence of supportive initiatives like training sessions provided by the Chamber of Commerce, could affect the transfer of training policies.

To conclude, the nature of training and pay policies clearly differ in two ways. First of all, even when the home country is kept invariable, less centralised programs are being observed for training policies. Moreover, formalisation is less prevalent as opposed to pay policies. Second, pay policies are far less adapted to local markets than training policies. Although pay policies are frequently adapted to host country institutions, the objective of the headquarters is to limit adaptation as much as possible. For training policies, local market requirements or training provision could affect the transfer of training policies, or the registration of training was sometimes the responsibility of the subsidiary. A final remark relates to the observation that subsidiaries' social actors make use of host countries' policies or sub-national labour markets to affect the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. The different employment policies and how these policies can affect pay and training policies at the subsidiary level, will be described in the next paragraphs. In addition, these paragraphs will discuss resources for social actors to shape employment policies at sub-national levels. They will hereby focus on employment policies at different sub-national levels within the research context 'Belgium'.

2.3 Articulating between institutions and local actors at different levels

As previously described, social actors are not only expected to engage in policies at sub-national levels when these policies are not in line with their objectives, but also when there are resources to do so. Scholars focusing on within country variation (Crouch et al., 2009; Lane & Wood, 2009) identify these sub-national policies as taking place at the regional and inter-firm level. At the regional level, different policies can occur as a result of the way in which a country is politically organised. Accordingly, the regional level is linked to the notion that national states consist of regional governments that have an exclusive responsibility for particular policy domains. As described before, studies define a regional policy as a comprising set of regularised practices. These practices are part of a given geographical territory that is inherent to a particular political construction (Lane & Wood, 2009; Reid & Musyck, 2000; Trigilia, 1991). One of the best illustrations is a federal state. In a federal state, different regions and regional agencies have a responsibility for different policy domains, like tax concessions, education programmes and research and development policies. These regional governments have been set up as a consequence of two scenarios. First and most frequently, former regional governments are clustered in one entity. Second and applicable for Belgium, regionalisation can occur because social actors state that this would lead to a better alignment between, for example, regional training centres and labour market needs (Witte, 2011). In other words, social actors do not just adapt the national logic but can transform it in accordance with regional needs.

Secondly, at the inter-firm level, alternative employment policies are enacted via organised clusters, webs of companies or inter-company relationships. Socio-economic literature often labels inter-company relationships as ‘clusters of firms’ or ‘industrial districts’. The main characteristic of industrial districts is the combination of co-operation and competition. The fact that companies within this network may deliver similar goods or products, has led some commentators to talk about them as ‘institutionalised co-operations’. This results from the idea that they are embedded in formalised inter-company co-operative networks (Del Ottati, 2002; You & Wilkinson, 1994). This formalisation is illustrated by referring to local institutions supporting the web of inter-firm relations. Funding organisations or training centres have been set up since companies are confronted with a particular context that is not completely in line with the companies’ objectives. Therefore, a set of companies collectively agrees on engaging in additional policies.

Thirdly, alternative employment policies can also occur at company level. Theoretically, this level was not initially distinguished as it has not been defined as a sub-national level. It is, however, integrated as a research context for Belgium, since this level also offers resources to social actors. Furthermore, it represents another mechanism than the sub-national level, in the sense that it can be complementary to the cluster the subsidiary is part of, as well as to the region in which it is located. However, subsidiary

specific policies do not always differ from the national or regional ones, as they can also reinforce these mechanisms. A good example is the prevalence of internal training centres along regional training policies and industry-specific training institutes. Regional governments can provide financial support to companies in order to organise their own training, at a different level than the one used nationally. Moreover, companies can individually add to industry-specific training programmes.

From an analytical perspective, by emphasising the regional, inter-firm and firm level as different levels, the concept of ‘institutional entrepreneurship’ will be useful in helping to identify the dynamics and processes explaining MNC behaviour within a particular national context like Belgium. Based on this, policies at sub-national levels will be presented as the result of the interaction with social actors. In other words, the employment policies at multiple sub-national levels are not necessarily set up within a top-down approach. They arise because of the need for social actors like subsidiaries, employers’ federations or trade unions and the resources available for these social actors. Put differently, employment policies do not unilaterally structure actors’ behaviour; they are, in fact, also subject to the objectives of the actors. The following paragraphs describe resources at different levels and analyse whether they are equally accessible for social actors within MNCs in Belgium (employees, employers and their representative organisations).

2.4 The Belgian institutional setting: the presence of resources

In Belgium, social actors can shape policies at sub-national levels: regional, inter-firm and firm level. Next to these levels, as identified in literature on within country variation, Almond (2011) theoretically conceptualised relevant spheres to be included when integrating employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. Specifically, he distinguished between the sphere of the state, the financial sphere, the training system and the way relations are set up between countries. Combining these levels and spheres results in four supportive structures offering resources to social actors in Belgium (Saka-Helmout & Geppert, 2011). Following paragraphs illustrate the Belgian institutional context to be particular in offering resources to social actors. As such, multiple possibilities are created where institutional entrepreneurship can be expected. The following paragraphs will illustrate institutional entrepreneurship based on concrete examples where possible.

2.4.1 Resources at the level of regional governments-skill and training system

The way Belgium as a country has evolved during the last decennia, results in a first type of resources. Specifically, the Belgian federal state resulted from federalisation by disaggregation (for an overview of state reforms see Swenden & Jans, 2006). As such, it should be considered as result from an attempt

to solve national conflicts by means of successive steps towards decentralisation to regional structures (contrary to Germany and Spain, for example). Policy domains became decentralised because no consensus could be reached between the parties involved at the national level (Witte, 2011). Decentralisation (as part of state reforms) results in the lessening of conflicts at the national or federal level (Swenden, Brans & De Winter, 2006). As a result of these state reforms, economic responsibilities were given to the regions and policy domains based on the citizens' language were given to the communities. Not only were policy domains transferred to regions and communities, development agencies were also set up on these levels.

The reform of the Belgian State as described in the previous paragraph, had profound implications for the regulation of employment and labour relations. Training and education were most affected. In Belgium, adult education was regionalised during institutional reform. As a consequence, placement as a tool of employment policies depends on the three regions (Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia), while initial education depends on the three linguistic communities (Dutch speaking, French speaking and German speaking) (Witte, 2011). The regions and the linguistic communities are in charge of most initiatives related to continuous vocational training³. This results in several involved organisations for vocational training in Belgium like FOREM (emploi formation en Wallonie) in the Walloon region, VDAB (Vlaamse dienst voor arbeidsbemiddeling en beroepsopleiding) in the Flemish region, Bruxelles Formation in the Brussels-Capital Region and ADG (Arbeitsamt der DG) for the German speaking community.

These reforms result in the creation of regional training bodies (both public and private), regional incentives to promote vocational training for specific target groups, or regional training cheques for companies. The main difference between the regional governments relates to the value of the training cheques as well as to the scope of the training policies. In Flanders on the one hand, some sectors have a 'covenant'; this is a specific agreement between a particular sector and the Flemish government. Concretely, it specifies the employability and training initiatives for a sector. Wallonia on the other hand focused, as part of the Marshall plan, on fast growing sectors to invest in. These differences in regional employment policies lead to other regional agencies. However, in both regions and communities, the board of directors and advisory boards of these agencies are based on parity. This means that resources are equally divided between employers and employees on a formal basis. In addition, the number of agencies, committees and advisory boards has increased with each state reform. Consequently, more resources have been given to trade unions and managers.

³ Education is a responsibility of the communities but agreements have been set up between the Brussels-Capital region and the Flemish and French speaking community and between the German-speaking and the French speaking community to organise education

2.4.2 Resources at the inter-firm level-sphere of the state/(skill and training system)

A first interpretation of the inter-firm level entails collective bargained employment policies at the sector level. The sphere of the state is referred to because the regulative nature of the system of collective bargaining and industrial relations. Indeed, the institutions involved set up legally binding agreements for all employees and employers involved (sometimes indirectly because they are a member of the organisation involved in the bargaining). Furthermore, collective agreements can be declared generally binding for all involved employers and employees, which means that deviations are not possible. The sphere of skill and training system is mentioned between brackets because the sector level does also provide for resources for pay policies on the sector level.

Specifically, in each sector, guidelines for pay and training (bi-annually negotiated between social partners across professions) are further aligned with particular needs for the sector. The number of resources offered to social actors is explained by the presence of sector specific institutions based on parity. Particularly, differences in resources for shaping training policies result from the presence of training centres within boards based on parity, and the distinction made between white-collar and blue-collar workers regarding vocational training⁴. As for the former, some but not all joint committees have a training centre financed by collective means aimed at a better alignment of training needs and sector demands. In addition, vocational training for white-collar workers, as opposed to that of blue-collar workers, is usually organised across joint committees. However, in some joint committees additional training for white-collar employees is being planned. As such, an additional resource is created. Differences in resources for pay policies are the result of negotiations between employers and employees. Specifically, each joint committee bargains on other remuneration instruments, such as pension schemes or variable pay. Furthermore, many joint committees have a social fund employers contribute to as part of their employee compensation. All these sector institutions have a board of directors based on parity, meaning that representatives from both trade unions and employers' federations are installed. Social actors can shape this level if they are the sector representatives on the advisory boards of training centres and social (pension) funds.

2.4.3 Resources at the inter-firm level-financial sphere-sphere of the state

A second form of inter-firm employment policies results from clusters around locations of shared economic interest (in the remainder referred to as a web of inter-firm relations). Examples of these

⁴ During the period of data collection, the distinction between blue- and white-collar workers was still in place. Within one sector, separate joint committees bargain on labour conditions for blue- and white-collar workers. In the remainder of this thesis, sector will be used to refer to the joint committees of blue-and white collar workers of the same sectors; joint committee will be used for blue- or white-collar workers specifically.

clusters are the port in Antwerp and Ghent or the biotechnology cluster in Mons. Quite often these clusters contain one central company (usually an MNC) surrounded by SMEs. Within Belgium, these clusters of companies can rely on industrial policies, a regionalised responsibility to support sub-national clustering. These supporting initiatives encompass venture capital, human capital centres or R&D. Contrary to the previous two levels, at the web of inter-firm relations, there are no resources available based on parity to shape these employment policies. Rather, the regionalised policy domain has several regional development agencies webs of inter-firm relations can rely on. Whether webs of inter-firm relations access these resources, depends heavily on the presence of a leading firm. The latter is often in charge of dividing the resources for what concerns finance and human capital among its suppliers and other companies. This is especially the case when the survival of these webs of inter-firm relations depends on internationalisation (Gibbon et al., 2008).

For example, the Flanders Language Valley was set up during the 1990s in the Ieper region (Flemish region) at the request of local companies and their representative organisations.⁵ This happened primarily because the region of Ieper benefited from several years of government and European Community aid (Musyck, 1995). In addition, there was an intense concentration of SMEs located close to the French border. At the centre of this network was a strong pilot firm working on speech technology. This company was in control of the funds. The web of inter-company relationships in which the central company took a leading role, pushed regional development agencies and the European Community to support its existence. It requested support such like ensuring continual investments and the prevalence of required skills by setting up contacts with universities. After a couple of years, the result was the Flanders Language Valley. Innovative employment measures emerged as a collaboration was set up with the University of Kortrijk. A course in computer linguistics and an artificial intelligence department was created in order to solve the shortage of skilled employees.

A similar example can be found in the Walloon region. With the rise of biotechnology in Europe, Wallonia as a region decided to focus on this particular sector.⁶ Therefore, it developed supporting policies to boost the level of economic competition. Specifically, three agencies were created to respectively deal with 1) monitoring rapid changes in the biotechnology sector (and financing pioneers in specific domains), 2) supporting international expansion by facilitating international joint ventures and 3) providing long term investment in the region by creating financial instruments like loans and guarantees (Biotech report, 2008). In addition, what is known as the 2005 Marshall Plan for Wallonia, set up supportive measures to create new clusters of inter-company links. The ‘Competitiveness Hubs Policy’ can be considered as an excellent example of this policy. It aimed at organising companies (or a sector) into one web of inter-firm relations. In doing so, it facilitated the web of inter-firm relations

⁵ Based on Wintjes 1999

⁶ Based on PlanMarshall2.Vert

in becoming the world leader in a particular niche. This occurred by favouring and attracting the necessary human resources and setting up an intensive partnership between commercial actors and academics. As in the case of Flanders Language Valley, the policies developed in the Walloon region were supportive of the creation of biotechnology clusters. In addition, some leading companies such as GlaxoSmithKline and UCB, surrounded by SMEs, played a key role together with universities in enhancing the innovative capacity of the Walloon region.

These cases illustrate the relevance of the institutional entrepreneurship perspective as they did not arise in a vacuum. The interplay between multiple levels and actors generated employment policies at the inter-firm level (or reinforces existing clusters) as illustrated by the examples above. More specifically, leading companies requested local institutions to set up support initiatives. In the Flanders Valley case, universities were contacted to formalise educational training in required IT skills in order to meet local labour market demands. In the Walloon region, research and development within universities happened in close collaboration with local companies. In addition, policy levels were responsive as well. In the first case, two levels were contacted (regional and European) to attract financial resources and to offer additional services. In the case of the 2005 Marshall Plan for Wallonia, three institutions were set up to boost the biotechnology cluster.

2.4.4 Resources at the company level-sphere of the state

On the company level, eventually, three mechanisms can be used in companies in Belgium: the works council, the union representatives and the committee for prevention and protection. In this regard, the Belgian system of collective bargaining is far less deregulated than the one in Germany for example, and still offers many resources to social actors (Holst, 2013). The first mechanism is the work council that is obligatory when a company has more than 100 employees. The councils' aim is to share information related to the financial situation of the company, the implementation of new technologies, employment, labour conditions or other topics that affect the employees (e.g. restructuring processes). The main role of the council is advisory ; the decision making role is limited. In reality, the council comes up with advices and proposals related to labour organisation and labour conditions. A second mechanism on the firm level refers to the union representative. The role of the representative is to set up collective agreements, to consider the compliance with social law, the labour regulation and the individual contracts within the company. When a works council is not present, the union representative takes up the role of the council. The third mechanism is the committee for prevention and protection at work which should be installed when a company has more than 50 employees. This advisory committee formulates proposals that concern health, safety and prevention in order to

optimise labour conditions. The first and third mechanism are based on parity and offer resources to social actors.

These resources, however, are not always used to shape employment policies at sub-national levels. They can be bypassed as well. At Inbev in Belgium for example, local managers used local resources outside the domain of employment to shape employment policies at the company level. Capron (2007) talks about judicial interference by management in labour disputes. Specifically, the management attempted to challenge the right to strike by appealing on the grounds of other laws, such as commercial law. The latter refers to the right to protect private property, the right to maintain economic activity and the right to work for non-strikers. However, it should be noted that management returned to the formal procedure for conflict resolution through the works council. Moreover, efforts have been made by the management to inform workers' representatives with regard to the plan, and have asked trade unions to formulate a counterproposal. Nevertheless, the case of AB Inbev clearly shows how subsidiary's managers were looking for alternative opportunities beyond employment policies in order to break the strike. Laws concerning private property were used by the employer. In this regard, management used a resource from another policy domain (commercial law protecting property and economic rights) in an attempt to bypass employment policies.

The different levels and domains described are not independent from one another. Specifically, each state reform has led to a further decentralisation of decision-making to communities and regions. Accordingly, regional consultative institutions with trade unions, employers and public authorities have grown. Furthermore, the regionalisation also impacted the system of industrial relations. Specifically, the close connection between social dialogue on the one hand and political decision making on the other hand, has caused regionalisation of industrial relations. This resulted in consultative committees, trade unions and employers' federations having each a French and Dutch speaking part. In general, it can be stated that the more responsibilities were delegated to the regional governments, the more both the formal and informal structures of industrial relations were regionalised. Furthermore, the employment policies at sub-national levels relate to one another as reinforcement has been observed (Deeg, 2009; Deeg & Jackson, 2007). For example, in the case of the sector covenant, the regional employment policy invented the initiative to encourage employability and continuous vocational training. The sector specified this to set up targets for employability and vocational training among its members.

2.5 Conclusion

The above chapter first of all shows that the nature of pay and training policies and practices differ, as well as their adaptation to host countries. Specifically, pay policies are far more controlled by formal

systems than training policies. In addition, training policies were more sensitive to local labour markets requirements and as such more adapted to the local context. Secondly, the chapter showed the institutional entrepreneurship perspective to be an interesting starting point for researchers to understand how dynamics and processes occur for employment policies at sub-national levels. This chapter also illustrates, however, the need to integrate the idea of available resources. By using both, this thesis will deal with two shortcomings in grasping the nature and the transfer of employment practices within MNCs: the weak attention to within country diversity and the limited conceptualisation of the role of actors. Moreover, it allows examining how employment policies operating at the sub-national (regional, inter-company) and company level in Belgium are shaped by social actors.

The first employment policy arose as part of the political construction particular for Belgium. Vocational training is a regionalised policy domain where advisory boards are based on parity. The second form reflects the level of the sector with specific training and social and pension funds of which the board of directors is also based on parity. The third possibility (second dimension of the inter-firm level) derives from the regionalised policy domain, industrial policy supporting collaboration between companies (in the remainder referred to as the web of inter-firm relations). Shaping employment policies on the web of inter-firm relations depends on a leading company using and dividing resources offered by the industrial policy. The company level is relevant to take into account as well. Specifically, the company specific employment policy does not merely emerge based on resources on the company rather by bypassing them. Inbev illustrated the use of these resources. Decisions from AB Inbev resulted in social conflicts and strikes; AB Inbev's management tried to break union actions by using other resources.

This chapter so has clearly illustrated Belgium to be a relevant research context for examining processes and dynamics at sub-national levels, because the scope of this analytical perspective leads to examining the interactions between social actors and policies at multiple levels. As far as the Belgian case is concerned, it meant to explore the action of local players within employment policies at multiple sub-national levels such as regions, inter-firm levels and firm levels. The use of the institutional entrepreneurship and the division of resources among social actors will allow to use a comprehensive framework of analysis which does not disentangle structures from actions, but integrates both. By doing this, the study will be able to investigate how social actors mediate the transfer by shaping employment policies at sub-national levels in Belgium.

Moreover, it can be concluded that Belgium offers a lot of resources to social actors. Because a lot of resources are based on parity, a rather equal division of resources to trade unions and managers can be observed. Specifically, except for the web of inter-firm relations, the board of directors and the advisory committee are based on parity. Important to state in this regard is the number of trade unions

(Christian, Socialist and Liberal) versus the number of employers' federations (one employers' federation per sector) present in Belgium. Accordingly, the bargaining space of trade unions is divided between three representative trade unions as opposed to one employers' federation. As a result, equal resources (as a consequence of parity) between trade unions and employers (the notion of parity) are only obtained if the former agree on a common strategy. However, similar reasoning can be made when looking at employers. Although employers are member of the same employers' federation, different objectives can be observed between SMEs and MNCs. As such, resources can be used for other purposes. How resources as described in this chapter, are used and divided among social actors, is the topic of the first empirical chapter below (part III, chapter VI). Before this, the following part describes the methodology used.

Part II: Methodology

Chapter III: Research Set-Up

The part on construction of the MNC population is based on:

Research question, Research Design and Methodology, In V. Pulignano & V. Dekocker. *The Employment Practices in Multinationals in Belgium* (pp.35-40). Leuven: Acco.

Dekocker, V., Doerflinger, N. & Pulignano, V. Promises and Pitfalls in quantitative studies in MNCs. *Critical Perspectives on International Business* (submitted, under review)

3.1 Introduction

The aim of the thesis is to investigate how subsidiaries' social actors (employees and employers and their representative organisations) mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. To examine this, an appropriate research set up needs to fulfil following conditions (Lewis, 2003; Mason, 2002). First of all, the above mentioned proposition requires a method which enable to examine how social actors shape employment policies and how these policies are used by subsidiaries' actors to influence MNCs' behaviour (the transfer). In addition, the MNC population and sample should compose of a specific type of MNCs in order to capture the transfer between MNCs and subsidiaries. Moreover, the selected MNCs must allow the examination of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels simultaneously. Finally, the research set up should select respondents that can give information on how pay and training policies and practices are transferred within MNCs' subsidiaries. The first chapter of this methodological part will therefore touch upon each of the abovementioned points in the following paragraphs.

3.2 The choice for qualitative case study research

A first point that is being dealt with, is why a case study is chosen as the most appropriate method of data collection and analysis. In order to understand this, the link between the propositions and the possibilities of case study research methods should be explained. Specifically, based on the literature, the thesis aims to investigate how social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. In doing so, it focuses first of all on how they shape employment policies at sub-national levels. Thereafter it focuses on how these policies are used by trade unions and managers to mediate the transfer. Put differently, feedback loops between employment policies at different sub-national levels and social actors are expected to be observed (Bennett & Elman, 2006).

As such, a research method giving insights on different (combinations of) resources on sub-national levels and on how social actors can use them to shape employment policies, is required,. Therefore, survey research does not suffice in exploring different combinations of employment policies at sub-national levels to explain the transfer of pay and training policies and practices within MNCs. Rather, one mean line is to be observed in most quantitative research, reflected in for example a particular regression equation. Moreover, the research method chosen needs to give an insight in the strategy of social actors. After all, entrepreneurship is assumed to be a strategic choice (Crouch et al., 2009; Heidenreich, 2012). So, in order to reconstruct the way social actors mediate the transfer, both social

actors would be investigated ideally. Although quantitative research could opt for a multi-respondent approach, the way the bargaining space between trade unions and managers is divided, could be hard to capture quantitatively. The choice for qualitative research was furthermore related to the limited attention devoted to employment policies at sub-national levels. As Ferner et al. (2012) stated, grasping the sub-national level for the study on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs, would mean a conceptual step forward. Although the relevant spheres or policy levels have been theoretically distinguished or derived from related literature on within country variation, there is no consensus on what employment policies and sub-national levels encompass. Put differently, there is no agreement on what employment policies at sub-national levels look like and on the resources they offer to social actors to engage in shaping these policies. This means that the research method chosen has to leave space to capture possible other relevant spheres or domains that can offer resources to social actors and mediate the transfer. Against this background, case study research based on social actors' description of the transfer is chosen instead of one single measurement or point of reference (Bennett & Elman, 2006).

Following Gerring (2004), our case studies compose of different dimensions of which one or more observations can be made. Accordingly, a case in our study is a particular way of social actors mediating the transfer of pay and training policies and practices within MNCs' subsidiaries by shaping employment policies at sub-national levels. Taken the above mentioned ideas into account, the aim is to observe this transfer from different observations from trade unions and HR managers (see 3.5.2). Moreover, no single measurement of transfer is integrated. Instead, the study focuses on control, centralisation and discretion on the one hand, and headquarters-subsidiary structure on the other hand (Bennett & Elman, 2006). In doing so, a case is considered as a configuration. Specifically, the focus is on the co-evolution of social actors, employment policies at sub-national levels and the transfer, rather than on the frequency of a particular transfer. In the study of MNCs' subsidiaries, the idea of configurations is especially of interest given the path dependency of some subsidiaries, the interconnectedness between subsidiaries of the same MNC and the way employment policies at sub-national levels can be nested (Bennett & Elman, 2006).

A typical case study design or homogenous sample was opted for, as this design aims to explore patterns between employment policies at sub-national levels, social actors and the transfer of pay and training policies and practices within MNCs. This means that the focus is on whether there is a cross-case relation between these factors (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Accordingly our target population and sample require MNCs and subsidiaries where a transfer can occur. In addition the presence of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels (regional, sector and web of inter-firm relations) and variation among them is needed to capture different patterns of employment policies at sub-national levels, social actors and the transfer of pay and training policies

and practices within MNCs. Therefore, the following paragraph will first of all construct a representative MNCs' population to study the transfer. Based on this, the required criteria, like presence of subsidiaries in two regions and presence of joint committees, will be added to select the MNCs for our study.

3.3 Selecting MNCs to study employment policies at sub-national levels and the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries

A second point to pay attention to is the selection of MNCs and subsidiaries that fulfil the criteria to study the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. An MNC for the study on transfer of pay and training policies and practices has been described as an organisation in which policies and practices are transferred between economically interlinked activities in more than one country (chapter I, p.32). The latter refers to the multiple sources of authority with which MNCs are confronted (Aharoni & Brock, 2010; Hoos, 2000). This applies to the number of countries in which the MNC is operational, the variance between the respective different national contexts and the interaction between these contexts. The interaction between these different systems creates a distinctive feature between MNCs and non-MNCs.

The next steps then need to operationalise the MNC as an organisation in which pay and training policies and practices are transferred between economically interlinked activities (table 4). Although interdependency can have different faces (e.g. resources and knowledge), the starting point for interdependency is formally acknowledging the ownership structure to be a source of interdependency (Madhok, 2006). More specifically and similar to previous studies on the topic, a dependent relationship between the headquarters and a subsidiary means that the former, as global ultimate owner (in the remainder referred to as GUO), has at least 50.01 per cent of the subsidiaries' shares. Therefore, other types of ownership structures like joint ventures are not taken into account. Specifically, when no party involved owns at least 50.01 per cent, there is no formal interdependency. In addition, the terms of 'subsidiary' and 'headquarters' need to be distinguished from other types of organisations like sites. According to Belgian company law, the headquarters is a company having control on another company, while the subsidiary is the subordinated company (Justitie, 1999). It is important to differentiate the latter from other kinds of sites because the study wants to ensure the presence of employees in the light of the research topic. The Belgian Company Law defines a site as a place that is identified geographically, and where at least one of the activities of the company takes place. It refers to units where employees are employed or where capital has been invested to develop products or services. However, by using this definition, warehouses are also taken into account. This, however, would include companies not aimed to be in the study. The presence of a number of

employees guaranteeing the presence of employment policies needs to be added (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1997; Kotey & Slade, 2005) . Therefore, it was necessary to use the European Works Council Directive (94/95/EC) as an additional source to specify our definition (Edwards et al., 2007b, McDonell et al., 2007). This directive defines an MNC as employing a minimum of 1.000 employees and having at least two operating sites in Europe with 150 employees each. This initial point of departure was adapted in accordance with several criteria. Following Edwards et al. (2007b), thresholds were lowered to 100 employees in the subsidiary and 500 employees worldwide. This is in line with literature on employment management and decision-making. Specifically, this number of employees still ensures the presence of some management structures (Kalleberg & Van Buren; 1996; Kotey & Slade, 2005). Consequently, adding these criteria resulted in two sub-populations:

- Foreign-owned MNCs with at least 500 employees worldwide and 100 in Belgian subsidiaries
- Belgian-owned MNCs with at least 500 employees worldwide and 100 employees in foreign subsidiaries

To select companies that fulfil these criteria, three datasets were combined. The following paragraphs will describe how this selection occurred.

Table 4 Overview of concept, definition and measurement of an MNC for investigating the transfer

Concept	Conceptual definition	Operational definition	Measurement
Multinational company	MNC as an organisation in which employment policies and practices are transferred between economically interlinked activities, i.e. this is between the headquarters and the subsidiaries on the one hand and among subsidiaries located in more than one country on the other hand.	The headquarters is a company or person having control over another company; the subsidiary is the subordinated company; the subsidiary employs enough employees to set up formal policies	Global ultimate owners with at least 50.01 per cent in the host country subsidiary, employing at least 500 employees worldwide and 100 employees in the host country

3.3.1 Constructing a representative MNC population for the study on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in Belgium

A representative dataset of MNCs in Belgium fulfilling the criteria as defined above was not available at the start of the thesis. Similar to other studies (for an overview see table 18 in appendix), company-related secondary datasets were therefore used as a point of departure (Ritchie, 2003). As these datasets were not initially set up for research purposes, three remarks need to be taken into account when making use of these datasets. First of all, criticism has been raised because of the weak representativeness the selected MNCs were offering to the entire population (Edwards et al., 2007b; McDonnell et al., 2007). The information in these datasets with regard to the MNC population is most often based on listings provided by chambers of commerce, regional development agencies or other sources. This creates problems. For example, lists provided by the chambers of commerce tend to be particularly problematic, as membership is mostly a precondition for being listed. This implies incompleteness and the fact that such lists could hardly be called ‘representative’ for an entire population. As a consequence of such considerations, the selected MNCs probably do not represent a larger population. A second remark, related to the first comment, refers to the way the concept of ‘the multinational company’ is defined. The definition and operationalisation above does not necessarily fit with the search criteria in these secondary datasets (Aharoni & Broch, 2010). Consequently a clear link between the concept as defined and a set of variables or indicators to operationalise the concept as intended in valid research is not guaranteed (Collinson & Pettigrew, 2009). This means that the process of operationalisation from concept to items should be sufficiently explored. In addition, the quality of the data available in these datasets can be questioned. More specifically, reported employment figures (in line with real figures), countries of origin (country of origin of MNCs versus country of origin of regional headquarters) and shareholder structure (joint ventures and independent companies instead of subsidiaries) are not always appropriate. This means that, companies, not intended to be included in the population, are selected (Edwards et al, 2007b; McDonnell et al., 2007). A first step in our methodology is to construct a representative list of MNCs to study the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in Belgium, taking into account the three above mentioned remarks.

Therefore, the thesis initially focused on data retrieved from secondary datasets (*Amadeus*, *Belfirst*, *Trendstop*) (table 5). Although these datasets give an overview on business activities in Belgium, the nature of MNCs and particularly the fact that they are operational across borders poses difficulties. If secondary datasets exist, their cross-national comparability is by no means ensured. Thus, when making use of them, an adequate level of comparability needs to be assured. To guarantee this, cross-checking information among several of these datasets, and individual contacts with companies was set up. The following paragraphs will describe the different steps in this screening process. It shows that

the information available to investigate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs in Belgium is not always in line with the criteria used to define the MNC, i.e. the country of origin (domestically-owned versus foreign-owned MNCs), the employment thresholds and the ownerships structures (subsidiaries instead of joint ventures or independent companies). How this information was controlled, is discussed in the next paragraph.

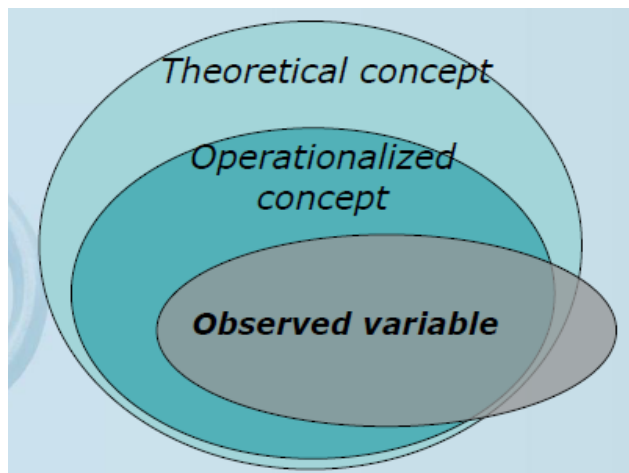
Table 5 Overview of secondary datasets

Dataset	Available information
Amadeus	Provides information on companies of all kind operational in Europe. Search criteria like sector, size, home country can be inserted
Belfirst	Provides information on companies of all kind operational in Belgium and Luxembourg. Search criteria are similar to Amadeus
Trendstop	Provides information on companies operational in Belgium, not on global ultimate owners. Personal contact details of specific responsables can be looked up

3.3.2 From three secondary datasets to a representative list of MNCs in Belgium

Concrete thresholds regarding shareholder structure (50.01 per cent) and employment size (500 employees worldwide and 100 in Belgium) were formulated in order to set clear boundaries for companies to be included based on secondary datasets (*Amadeus*, *Belfirst* and *Trendstop*) (table 5). As these secondary datasets did not guarantee measurement validity (figure 6), a company-by-company check was needed including examining websites and personal phone contact. The first two datasets, *Amadeus* and *Belfirst* were used to construct the domestically-owned and foreign-owned MNC population, based on ownership structure and employment criteria. These datasets incorporate information on MNCs operational in Belgium. *Trendstop* was used to re-check employment criteria as it does not provide information on the global ultimate owner.

Figure 6 Illustration of validity



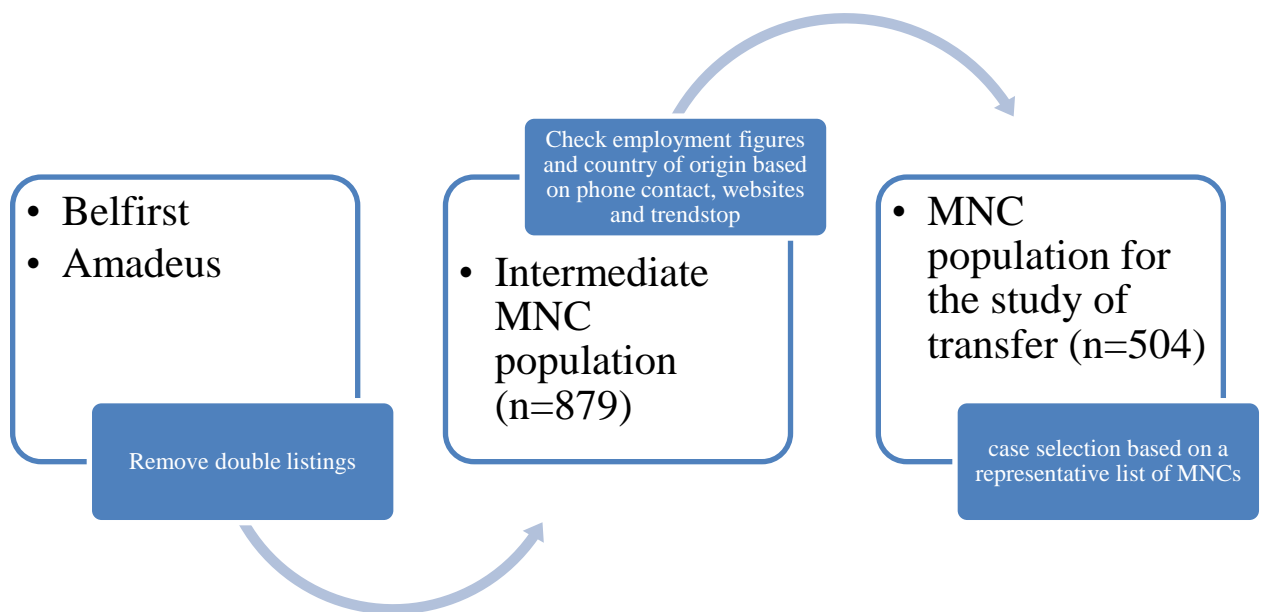
Billiet, 2013

In order to optimise the population listing, two search strategies were used, incorporating the nature of the company as a research indicator (being a subsidiary owned for 50.01 per cent by a global ultimate owner or being a global ultimate owner with subsidiaries in Belgium). The first search strategy used the location of the subsidiary (bottom up) and the number of employees in Belgium as criteria. Criteria were: being owned for at least 50.01 per cent by a global ultimate owner and 100 employees in the subsidiary in Belgium. The second one used the global ultimate owner with subsidiaries in Belgium and having at least 500 employees worldwide. These two search strategies resulted in two lists, respectively consisting of 1928 and 926 MNCs in Belgium, fitting our criteria. The initial lists were downloaded in June 2011 and updated with a more recent version in February 2012.⁷

The two research strategies, however, showed different numbers of MNCs. This could be explained by MNCs not having 500 employees worldwide or not having 100 employees in Belgium. However, the difference also reflects inconsistencies in information, as the following paragraphs will explain. Specifically, these datasets were both based on the companies' annual reports, although other companies were selected depending on the search strategy used. Using one list as the reference list, a company-by-company screening was executed in order to refine the list. Combining these two lists and thereby eliminating problems such as double-listings resulted in a list of 879 companies (figure 7).

⁷ The final population was used to organise a survey in 2013 with 194 HR managers in Belgian subsidiaries. Results of this survey were published as Pulignano, V., & Dekocker, V. (2014). *Employment practices in Multinationals in Belgium*. Leuven: Acco.

Figure 7 Overview of research steps in constructing a representative MNC population



The second step in compiling the dataset consists of checking employment criteria, by using *Trendstop*, or through phone contact with companies. Phone contacts were also used as screening interviews. More specifically, the information gathered from different secondary resources was rechecked: the country of origin, the number of employees in Belgium and worldwide. This phase also allowed identifying companies that were dissolved or were taken over by other companies, since the data in our initial list were based on the data of the last year available. For a number of companies however, information on the number of employees in Belgium or worldwide was still missing. The final screening resulted in a total of 504 companies meeting the population criteria (table 6). Put differently, out of the 879 companies based on a combination of datasets, 375 were left after the phone screening. This is remarkable, since selection criteria like country of origin, host country (Belgium), employment threshold and ownership structures could be filled in. So when inserting a criterion like an employment threshold of 500 employees worldwide, not all companies in the reported list were apt to the criterion.

Table 6 Result of the revision of national and international datasets

	Frequency	Relative frequency (per cent)
Useable	504	57.3
Non response (type I)	45	5.1
Non response (type II-missing information)	169	19.2
Not meeting the selection criteria	140	15.9
Belonging to a company already listed in the population (double occurrence)	21	2.4
Total Listing	879	100

With regard to the final screening phase, there are some important additional aspects to mention. First of all, one might expect a time lag between the data obtained from the datasets and the current situation of MNCs, as data are based on the last available year. Certainly, due to the particular economic situation, a lot of companies have undergone major restructuring processes leading to a closure, fusion or merger. Of all companies not fulfilling the criteria, only 5 per cent is due to decreased employment figures because of a reorganisation in the past years. These restructuring processes may, however, have caused a change in ownership. As such, the possible double mentioning of a specific global ultimate owner in the population list needed to be checked. Consequently, companies that became part of a larger group that was already listed, were removed (n=21). As only 5 per cent of the non-listed companies were object to reorganisation, the remaining companies not fulfilling the criteria, were non-responsive, or no information could be found. 37 per cent was linked to misclassification. These companies did not have a multinational character or did not fulfil the required employment figures, but were, however, listed as MNCs in the datasets used. This was particularly the case for Belgian-owned companies. Besides this, two types of non-response can be found. The first type refers to companies not willing to give information (n=45); the second type refers to companies for which no information was found at all (n=169) (no company website, no phone number). The cross-checking as described in the previous paragraphs has shown to be relevant for validity of our MNC population. In doing this cross-checking, some additional decisions had to be made for special cases regarding country of origin, employment size and ownership structure. The following section will report on these decisions.

3.3.3 Problems and pitfalls when using secondary datasets

Based on the revision of the listed companies and on phone contacts with companies, 37 per cent of the companies were deleted (figure 6). Four domains were taken into account while selecting the MNCs on the list: the country of origin, the ownership per centage, the intermediate structures and the presence of holdings. They will be discussed in the following in order to explain the decisions that were made and how they impact the construction of the MNC population

Sometimes, the country of origin of the global ultimate owner was listed as the country in which the national or regional headquarters are located. For cases giving national or regional headquarters instead of the country of origin, the information was adapted. The list also reported some tax havens (n=29, n (United Arab Emirates)= 1, n (Switzerland)= 18 and n (Luxembourg)=10). In these cases, the country of origin was not adapted as to the best of our knowledge, the global ultimate owner was located in this country.

Secondly, the per centage of shares owned by the global ultimate owner was not always in accordance with headquarters owning at least 50.01 per cent of the subsidiaries' shares. Although this should exclude joint ventures, intermediate structures and independent companies, some of these company structures were found in the list. As one of the central features of the research was the formal interdependence between headquarters and subsidiaries, joint ventures were not within the target population. More specifically, Belgian Company Law (Justitie, 1999) refers to common control as control that a limited number of partners exercise together when they have agreed that decisions regarding the orientation of company-specific policy (such as employment policies or research and development) cannot be taken without their common consent. Not taking into account joint ventures for the study on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries is in line with research on the effect of ownership structures (Madhok, 2006). In addition, independent companies were listed, even though the research aimed to include subsidiaries only. Phone contact with these companies indeed revealed that these subsidiaries were no longer owned by the MNC. In most of the cases, it was a former subsidiary now acting as an independent supplier for a particular sector (e.g. automotive industry).

A third remark is related to the prevalence of intermediate structures. Specifically, when cross-checking the two initial lists, companies were identified as global ultimate owner and subsidiary at the same time. A frequently occurring structure was a Belgian subsidiary having subsidiaries in Belgium or even in other European countries. As a consequence, this company could appear as a Belgian ultimate owner with different subsidiaries in Belgium and as subsidiary with a foreign ultimate owner. Since *Trendstop* could only be used for checking the number of employees, company websites and

annual reports were consulted for each case with intermediate structures. The number of employees had to be verified, since the numbers for the main subsidiaries and the sub-subsidiaries together, were not always equal to the total number of employees in Belgium. This meant that the number of employees mentioned on the level of the subsidiary, for example consisting of two sites, could differ from the sum when adding up the number of employees of the two sites separately.

A final remark has to do with the ownership structure of holdings. A holding is a typical structure within MNCs. Sometimes, the listed holdings had more than 100 employees, and thus met the criteria to be included in the target population. Specific for holding structures is, however, their complex ownership status – some companies had more than one owner, without having a global ultimate owner. In these cases, it was decided to consider the owner with the highest percentage of the subsidiary's shares as the global ultimate owner. It was important to reconstruct the holdings' ownership structure in order to avoid having the same global ultimate owner more than once in the population listing. Specifically, a global ultimate owner could be listed twice when it was at the same time a majority owner in a fund. In these cases, unravelling the structure made it possible to have each global majority owner only once in the list.

In addition to the shortcomings above, not all information could directly be obtained within the datasets, as was the case for the number of employees in Belgium. The majority of the MNCs only had one subsidiary. When companies had different sites and subsidiaries in Belgium, however, the number of employees had to be counted manually to be able to check whether the employment criterion of having at least 100 employees in Belgium was met. Although the subsidiary was defined apart from sites because of the legal statute of subsidiaries, one formal subsidiary could consist of different sites. In addition, the operational definition of domestically-owned companies needed to be checked, in particular whether the Belgian-owned companies had at least 100 employees abroad. Those two search criteria, the number of sites and the sum of employees across sites could not be added to the search strategy so manual calculation was necessary. This confirms the finding of Van Beveren (2007) who already pointed to the need of additional search criteria within these datasets when doing research on MNCs.

Thus, to the best of our knowledge, the MNC population operational in Belgium is composed of 504 firms meeting the criteria. In the remainder part, this MNC population will be used as a point of departure to select the case studies. Specifically, the dimensions of presence in regional governments, sectors and web of inter-firm relations will be added in order to investigate how social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. The fact that the subsidiaries of MNCs operating in Belgium could be drawn from the MNCs' population entails important advantages that are not so often met in qualitative research on

MNCs. First of all, much case study research on the transfer of employment practices and policies is based on the easy access to subsidiaries or merely focuses on one country of origin or sector (Edwards et al., 2007b; McDonnell et al., 2007). Furthermore, many studies have considered MNCs as big players and focus on very large scaled MNCs like Dell, Microsoft or Apple. This means that data on more moderate MNCs is often missing. This representative MNC population however, allows to select subsidiaries based on predefined criteria for integrating employment policies at sub-national levels. The next paragraphs explain the way cases have been selected, the method used to gather information and the required respondents.

3.4 Case selection

Once the MNC population has been set up, the next step is to add criteria to integrate employment policies at multiple sub-national levels into the study of the transfer. Specifically, in order to examine the resources offered by employment policies at multiple sub-national levels and to investigate how they are used by subsidiaries' social actors to mediate the transfer, the case selection needs to guarantee the presence of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. At the same time, the research requires variation. The latter is necessary to be able to investigate how different configurations of one employment policy can go along with a particular transfer within the same MNC's strategy. So next to the presence in more than one country, the employment thresholds worldwide (500) and in Belgium (100) and a formal interdependence (50.01 per cent owned), the criterion of presence of employment policies at more than one sub-national level was added.

Accordingly, the selection of MNCs' subsidiaries was based on the presence of employment policies on at least two sub-national levels. Having subsidiaries in two of the three regions could easily be measured based on the postal code of the subsidiaries. These regions are the Flemish and Walloon region, as regional development agencies are installed in each region⁸. Presence of the sector was based on the number of the joint committees in the subsidiaries. The presence of two different committees was required to maximise variance within and across cases. After all, the research wants to allow for divergence in configurations between social actors, employment policies at sub-national levels and the transfer of pay and training policies in MNCs' subsidiaries. The web of inter-firm relations could not be captured as input-output tables, a proxy variable used to indicate the exchange within and between sectors in given locations, is only available on the macro-level. However, the fact that the presence of two sub-national levels is guaranteed in our cases, allows us to examine the two

⁸ The Brussels-Capital Region and the German speaking community have not been considered as placement and initial education for companies in this region and community are also partially foreseen by the Flemish and Walloon government.

propositions. This way, the research set up allows us to examine the resources of each level separately, as well as employment policies at sub-national levels as interlocked or nested (Ritchie, 2003). In addition, as subsidiaries in different regions and sectors belong to the same MNC, MNCs' characteristics could be controlled. Other potential variance was minimised as well: the supra-national dimension (European, Asian or American) was kept invariable as previous studies have shown the influence of these levels on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs (Edwards et al., 2012; Oh & Rugman, 2012). Consequently the thesis only considers one supranational level: European MNCs were selected to keep the supra-national level constant (n= 350). The European level was chosen for instead of Asian or American MNCs as literature has shown that foreign owned MNCs have their headquarters most frequently in the neighbouring countries (Edwards et al., 2007; McDonnell et al., 2007).

Based on these selection criteria, 8 MNCs were selected. This means that within a general population of MNCs with minimum 500 employees worldwide and 100 in Belgium, only 8 MNCs had at least 2 subsidiaries in one region consisting of at least 100 employees, together with the presence of two different joint committees per subsidiary.

At first, it was surprising to see that only 8 MNCs met the criteria, as many large MNCs have been known to have different operations in Belgium. Four reasons are put forward to explain the limited number of MNCs. First of all, it is important take into account the difference between a site and a subsidiary, as mentioned above. There are MNCs with different sites in different regions in Belgium, but in reality, the sites are clustered in one Belgian subsidiary. Most of the time, this structure reflects a tendency for centralisation and control in order to set up a uniform Belgian employment policy. Second, different legal subsidiaries would require separate works councils and trade union representations. So by integrating different sites in one formal subsidiary, MNCs have to install the works council and a union representation only once. Third, the assumed number of MNCs with subsidiaries each having 100 employees can be overestimated. Often, sites or subsidiaries do not have a subsidiary status because they are independent (sometimes a former subsidiary that became a supplier for the whole sector) or they have the status of joint ventures, meaning that no formal control is executed. Fourth and related to the third explanation, the nature of MNCs' structure can cause an overestimation of MNCs with more than one subsidiary in Belgium. As defined in the literature review, MNCs are not only composed by headquarters and national subsidiaries, but are based on global business functions and business divisions (each division delivering one specific type of product or service). Over time, one business division can be acquired (see for example the first business division of Packaging (p.115)). This can result in two Belgian subsidiaries belonging to two different owners. However, due to their former shared owner, subsidiaries can still be assumed to be part of the same MNC.

All 8 MNCs were contacted and four of them confirmed collaboration. They will be labelled based on the sector they operate in: Waste, Food, Packaging and ICT (see chapter V). The following paragraphs will describe the respondents, the questions used and the method of data gathering within these MNCs.

3.5 Data collection process

After having defined and selected an MNC to integrate employment policies at sub-national levels, three additional questions need to be answered: what will be examined, whom the thesis will question to collect the information and how this data collection will be done. These three parameters will be described in the last paragraphs of this chapter.

3.5.1 What has been examined?

The goal of this thesis is to distinguish between different configurations of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels, social actors and transfer. With policies at sub-national levels, the thesis first of all encompasses regional policies, their agencies and the resources on these levels like board of directors of advisory committees. Second, two forms of the inter-firm level are integrated. The inter-firm level in its first dimension refers to the sector, with training institutes and social or pension funds giving resources to social actors by their boards (based on parity). The second dimension of the inter-firm level is composed of geographically clustered companies. Within this group of companies MNCs can access and divide valuable resources as MNCs are most frequently crucial in the competitiveness of the web of inter-firm relations. So not only the number of resources and the number of initiatives differ between employment policies at sub-national levels, also the nature of resources and policies varies. A resource at the sub-national level is here understood as an instrument that can potentially enhance the bargaining position of the social actor to shape the policy. An employment policy at the sub-national level, as previously described, is understood as an initiative used by social actors to mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries because of its contribution to MNCs' competitive advantage.

As previously described, the thesis focuses on the transfer of training and pay policies and practices, because employment policies at sub-national levels are relevant for them (see chapter II). In addition, they have widely been investigated within the literature on the transfer within MNCs (Ferner et al., 2005; Marginson et al., 2010; Quintanilla, et al., 2008). As previously defined, pay policies refer to formal systems of appraisal (a system for setting individuals' performance objectives and monitoring

performance against past objectives, carried out annually or more frequently), variable pay (merit pay, performance-related pay, performance-related bonuses or payment by results) or function classification (added value of different functions within the whole company). Training refers to vocational training defined as training sessions offered by internal or external organisations to employees, in order to adjust and adapt employees' skills to meet changing demands and remain competitive (Cappelli, 2012; Colbert, 2004). This vocational training entails both general and job specific training. General training is defined as training for personal development (e.g. presentation skills, negotiation skills); specific training is training for the job (e.g. statistical software for researchers). These policies will initially be questioned for the largest occupational group (LOG) within the subsidiaries. The focus on the LOG is in line with the methods used in previous studies on this topic in order to distinguish between different groups in the same subsidiaries. In Belgium, this means that the LOG will refer to blue-collar workers, white-collar workers or senior staff as collective bargaining was organised separately for these groups at the time of data collection.

For the transfer, the thesis makes a distinction between control, centralisation and discretion and the headquarters-subsidiary configuration. Control (bureaucratic control) is reflected by the amount of written documents, policies, planning and systems set up to measure output and behaviour. In MNCs this can refer to shared services (services used in all or the majority of the subsidiaries) and information systems (systems gaining access to information of all subsidiaries worldwide) (Gamble, 2003; Edwards & Kuruvilla, 2005). Centralisation is then defined as a decision-making process between headquarters and subsidiaries in which control is to a certain extent hierarchically organised (Ghoshal & Nohria, 1989; Martinez & Jarillo, 1989). More specifically, it examines whether control is located only on headquarters' level, or whether regional and national headquarters also execute control. Furthermore, centralisation is inversely related to the extent of subsidiary's discretion. That is whether the subsidiary is forced to implement a policy or practice set by a higher level such as the corporate headquarters, whether the subsidiary can develop a policy or practice within the guidelines/framework set by a higher organisational level or whether the subsidiary can set its own policy and practices (Edwards et al., 2007; McDonnell et al., 2007; Minbaeva & Navrbjerg, 2011). The headquarters-subsidiary configuration is defined as a tight constellation of mutually supportive elements, a set of formal and informal employment tools (Birkinshaw & Morrison, 1995). Concretely it investigates whether there are headquarters with national subsidiaries or global headquarters with subsequent hierarchical levels or organisational structures like business divisions, European headquarters and national headquarters. These different dimensions of transfer and employment policies were questioned with different respondents within MNCs. The next section gives information on the type of respondents and how they have been selected.

3.5.2 Who has been approached?

As the thesis wants to investigate how subsidiaries' social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies by shaping employment policies at sub-national levels, respondents or informants need to offer an insight into 1) the resources and bargaining space of employees, employers and their representative organisations, 2) how these resources are used to shape employment policies at sub-national levels and 3) how these policies are used by social actors to mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices. Therefore trade unions representatives as well as managers (and their federations) are questioned in each subsidiary. Not only the subsidiary level is hereby taken into account but also the representatives at the sector level and the supra-national or global manager for the MNC were interviewed.

Within the subsidiaries, trade union representatives as well as managers and employers' organisations were contacted. Access to (HR) managers within the subsidiaries was based on Trendstop. This database allows to look up the email address and direct phone number of the HR managers. However, it is important to note that not all subsidiaries in Belgium had an overall HR manager. In these situations, the director has been approached, as in many cases this was the former director of an acquired SME that had been responsible for employment policies. Access to trade union representatives mainly happened via informal contacts. Specifically, a list of the selected companies was given to contacts within trade unions, namely the socialist trade union (ABVV) and the Christian trade union (ACV). They added the sector and company union representatives per joint committee. The use of these informal contacts was necessary as no public lists of representatives on company level are available. There was no direct access to the liberal trade union that has relatively few members and thus was less likely to be represented in our cases. Therefore, scheduled interviewees were asked for the contact details of the representative of the liberal trade union (ACLVB) where applicable. A similar approach was used when trade unions did not respond via email or phone. Specifically, trade union representatives of the socialist or Christian trade union could check whether the person was still in place or had been replaced by a newly appointed representative. However, it should be noted that not all trade unions were represented in each subsidiary. Most frequently, one dominant trade union was engaged in the works council, depending on the location of the subsidiary or the sector (manufacturing versus services). Local or Belgian HR managers were also asked to get in contact with the regional HR manager or manager on headquarters' level. For Waste, there was no global HR manager during the time of data collection. Access to the employers' federation was organised via mail and phone and an interview could easily be organised. A similar approach was used for training centres on the sector level.

The nature of the respondents, however, differs. HR managers are, as opposed to trade unions (informants), very often considered to be elite interviewees. Elite interviewees are defined as a group in society because of their power, talent or privileges (Welch, Marschan-Piekkari, Penttinen, & Tahvanainen, 2002). Accordingly, in business research, an elite is referred to as someone from the senior or middle management level, with a longstanding track record within the company and a widely spread network and who is responsible for a functional area which enjoys a high status within the corporation (Welch et al., 2002). In line with the literature, Belgian HR managers in the investigated cases have a seniority of 11 (Food), 5 (Walloon subsidiary Packaging) and 20 years (ICT)⁹. Waste was an exception, as the function of Belgian HR manager had only recently been created. A second characteristic is the difficult access to an elite. Quite often informal contacts or an intermediary step are needed to be organised in order to get in contact with the elite. This was particularly the case for HR managers on headquarters or supra-national level. In these cases, an interview with the Belgian HR manager was a necessary step to obtain access to global HR managers, since contact details were not available in another way. Third, the most obvious characteristic distinguishing HR managers from trade unions, is that the former are more likely to inform on all the aspects of the transfer as they did participate in it (e.g. worldwide employment policies). Trade union representatives are informants that are not always involved in the whole process of employment policies. This became clear when some trade union representatives clearly stated that they had no idea on how a particular practice had been implemented or that contact with global or European headquarters never took place.

The interviews were organised in 2012 by one researcher, starting at the end of February and finishing by the end of October 2012. To guarantee and maximise data gathering, interviews related to the same MNC were spread. This allowed first of all to transcribe the interviews and read the information that then could be integrated in the next interview in order to obtain more (specific) information. In addition the recorded interviews were transcribed as soon as possible to minimise bias (Beamer, 2002). In total 36 interviews with 42 respondents were executed (table 5). The shortest interview lasted 32 minutes, the longest interview 1 hour and 42 minutes. Most of the interviews were scheduled to last one hour, since particularly managers were not able to dedicate more time. The number of cases reflects all social actors involved, except for one subsidiary (see section on non-response, p.96).

All the participants were informed in advance and had the possibility to withdraw from participation at any time, even after having confirmed their collaboration. In addition an agreement with the conditions for confidentiality was set up (Weiss, 1995). For the majority of the subsidiaries, some parts of the interview were off the record. Moreover, as the interview was sometimes considered as a 'listening post' for both trade unions or managers on different levels, non-disclosure agreements were

⁹ The HR manager of the largest SME became the HR manager within ICT

set up. All the interviews with trade unions and managers are shown in table 7. The way these interviews were organised, is the topic of the next section.

Table 7 Overview of the interviews

Company	Level	Social actors	Location	Language
Waste	National level	Belgian HR manager	Belgian Head office	D
	Subsidiary level	Trade union FGTB	Phone interview-office	FR
	Subsidiary level	Trade union representative CSC	Subsidiary	FR
	Sector level	Trade union representative CSC	Trade unions	FR
	Subsidiary level	Local Manager	Subsidiary	FR
	Subsidiary level and sector level	Trade union representatives ACV (2)	Subsidiary	D
	Sector level	Trade union representatives ACV	Trade unions	D
	Subsidiary level	Local Manager	Subsidiary	D
ICT	Headquarters-Belgian Headquarters	Global Manager and Belgian HR manager	Belgian Head office	D
	Subsidiary level	Trade union representative FGTB	Subsidiary	D
	Subsidiary level	Local Manager	Subsidiary	D
	Subsidiary level	Trade union representative ACV	Subsidiary level	D
Food	Subsidiary	International HR manager business divisions 2&3	Head office	D
	Subsidiary	Local Manager	Subsidiary	D/FR
	Sector level	Trade union representative ACV	Trade unions	D
	Headquarters	Global HR manager	Global headquarters	E
	Subsidiary	Trade union	Home	D

		representative ACV		
	National level	Belgian HR manager business division 1	Belgian Headquarters	D
	Subsidiary	Trade union representative ACLVB	Belgian Headquarters	D
Packaging	Supra-national level	HR manager	Phone call	FR
	Subsidiary level	HR manager business division 2 (Walloon subsidiary)	Subsidiary	FR
	Subsidiary level	HR managers business division 1 (Flanders)	Subsidiary	D
	Sector level + subsidiary level	Trade union representative sector and company representatives ACV(2)	Trade unions	D
	Subsidiary	Trade union representative ABVV	Home	D
	Subsidiary	Trade union representative FGTB	Subsidiary	D
	Subsidiary	Trade union representative FGTB	Subsidiary	FR
Sector level	Employers federation packaging		Employers- federation	D
	Training institute white-collar workers-trade unions		Office	D
	Training institute white-collar workers		Office	D
	Training institute Waste		Training institute	FR/D
	Training institute white-collar workers		Trade unions	FR

	– trade unions			
	Training institute Food		Training institute	D
	Training institute white collar workers –employers		Employers- federation	D
	Employers federation Waste		Employers- federation	D
	Employers Federation Food		Employers- federation	D
	Training institute white collars- Employers		Employers- federation	D

3.5.3 How the data have been collected?

A final step in the research set up is the method of data collection. This happened through semi-structured interviews and documents analyses. The latter composes of a collection of agreements on the company and the sector level, company specific documents, newspaper articles and regional policies (table 8). The document analysis was initially used to get a first impression on pay and training policies and practices within MNCs' operations in Belgium, and to have general information on the company worldwide and background characteristics of subsidiaries in Belgium. Thereafter, more specific information on pay and training policies and practices was obtained based on the collective agreements and regional policies. The former relates to the per centage of expenditure to training, contributions to the sector fund or employees involved in training the social actors on the sector agreed on. The latter refers to soft governance in the sense that regional development agencies can be used but are not obligatory.

Table 8 Overview of consulted documents

Collective agreements ¹⁰	
Food	Collective agreements
ICT	Collective agreements
Packaging	Collective agreements
Waste	Collective agreements
Newspaper articles	
Food	42
ICT	36
Packaging	11
Waste	26
Other secondary data sources	
Company specific presentations	Waste
Policy documents	DE VLAAMSE REGERING 2009-2014 EEN DAADKRACHTIG VLAANDEREN IN BESLISSENDE TIJDEN, Voor een vernieuwende, duurzame, en warme samenleving Beleidsnota werk, 2009-2014, een nieuwe arbeidsmarktvisie voor Vlaanderen Biotech in Wallonia Report 2008 Streven naar uitmuntendheid, Plan Marschall, 2.vert Beleidsnota Brussel 2009-2014, Samen grenzen verleggen

Before constructing the topic guide, all the documents mentioned in table 8 were read. This was an important step before the actual data collection (figure 8), as differences in employment policies were to be expected. Specifically, regional initiatives differed between the Flemish and Walloon region, like for example the sector covenant. Furthermore, a comparison of collective agreements between joint committees illustrates that the per centage of the payroll spent to training services differed between sectors and that not all sectors had a training centre or a pension fund. In addition, newspaper articles could inform on the web of inter-firm relations and the differences in initiatives among companies. For the company Waste for example, newspaper articles reported on a collaboration between the regional

¹⁰ The consulted collective agreements and articles are not mentioned in the overview table as this would affect anonymity and non-disclosure agreements.

government and a network of companies of which Waste Walloon was the leading company. Similarly, Food was involved in setting up a web of inter-firm relations in close collaboration with the university. Waste Flanders was also frequently mentioned in the newspapers because of a conflict with the neighbourhood with regard to noise and pollution. This information was important to keep in mind while constructing the topic guide. Not only theoretical frameworks should be represented as concrete situations on the sub-national level, also concrete examples for the pay and training policies and practices will give more reliable information (Weiss, 1995) (figure 8).

Besides these concrete situations, the use of probe questions was foreseen. These probes, described as follow-up questions, enable researchers to have more information, descriptions and explanations. Furthermore, they allow the interviewee to talk about topics that were not expected by the interviewer. The latter, for example, occurred in the first group of interviews where interviewees talked about the way social actors formally and informally shaped employment policies at sub-national levels by using resources at these levels (Berry, 2002). As questions on this theme were not initially set up, probes were helpful in getting more in-depth information. As a consequence, the information received from the first group of interviews was reflected upon. By integrating more recent literature on the bargaining space caused by inequality in resources, the first proposition was added. Consequently, questions on social actors shaping employment policies at sub-national levels were included in subsequent interviews (figure 8).

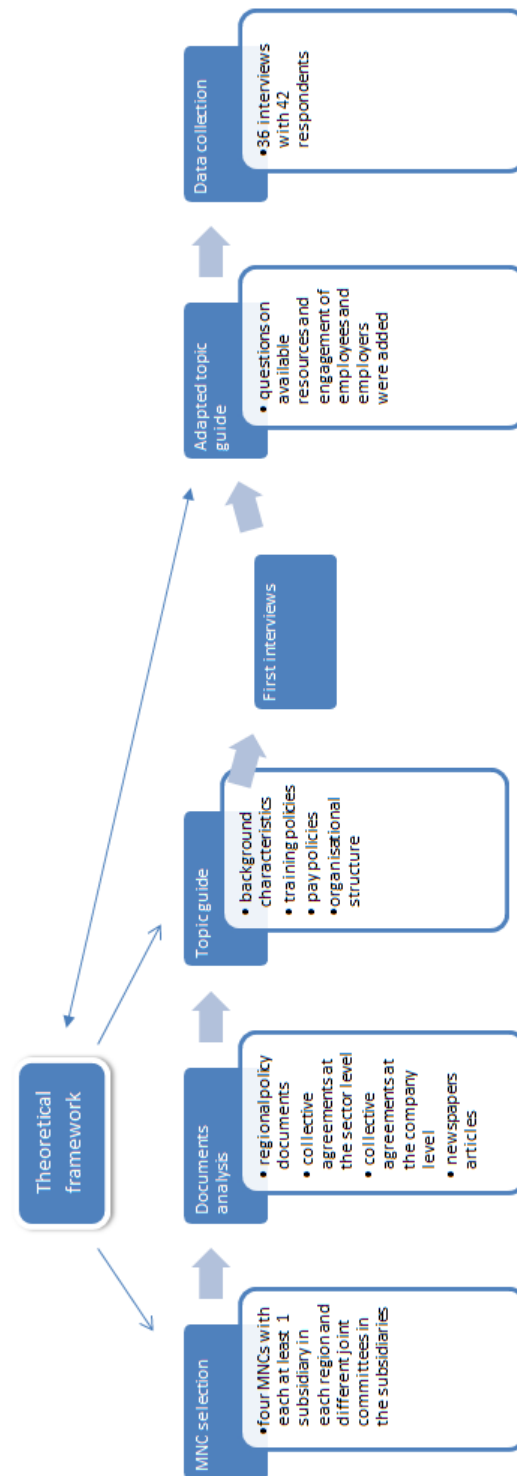
The latter shows the usefulness of probes within the research set up. They proved to be very important since it enables the interviewer to push the interviewee beyond first impressions on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. In addition, probes motivate interviewees to consider a particular topic from different perspectives (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2007). Probes were used when the interviewee gave an indication of a broader explanation or perspective on the transfer without fully describing it. Probes were only used when additional information was obtained, in other words, till a particular level of saturation was reached. The use of probes to get more information was only successful when more general questions were formulated first. These questions allow to give an overview of different dimensions and configurations probes can be used for to get more information. However, in the elite interviews, questions that were too generally put, were problematic. Specifically, the interviewer was not assumed to ask for information that could be found somewhere else as it was seen as a waste of time (Beamer, 2002). Therefore concrete situations showed the interviewee that the interviewer was informed. Moreover, concrete situations maximise the chance to receive concrete answers instead of vague responses. So while constructing the topic guide, a balance between general and more detailed questions was put forward to have a complete answer, taking care not to influence the answer itself (Legard et al., 2007).

Specifically, general and more detailed questions are reflected in the structure of the topic guide. The list of the topics as presented in table 19 and table 20 in appendix was the same for all respondents at the subsidiary level. The opening questions were used to introduce the respondents, their function within the company and their seniority. The second and third part dealt with background questions on the subsidiary and the MNC worldwide. This retrospective questioning aimed at getting an insight into how the subsidiary and the MNC had evolved over time. The fourth and fifth part explicitly dealt with the transfer, what headquarters-subsidiary configurations looked like, the extent of control, centralisation and discretion. In these parts, more detailed questions started to differ based on the analysis of collective agreements and other secondary documents (step 1 figure 8). The overall approach, however, remained the same, bearing in mind that concrete situations encourage respondents to give more reliable information (Weiss, 1995). The final part, i.e. the way employment policies at sub-national levels has been set up, was added based on the first interviews. The original checklist was adapted as the initial focus was on the influence of employment policies at sub-national levels on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Based on the first group of interviews (figure 8), and the concepts of institutional entrepreneurship and resources, it seemed valuable to add questions on the way these employment policies at sub-national levels were set up.

The order of the topic guide was not strict; the specific order could vary between the interviews. The topic guide was translated in French and English to make the interview more accessible for the respondents and in order to maximise collaboration. The topic guide on the sector level is a separate one, as the insight in processes on sector level differs from the one on company level. The topic guide for the sector is composed of five parts: the profile of the interviewee, the composition of the sector (companies, social actors), the description of the services and funds at sector level, the way they have been set up and the connection with other employment policies at sub-national levels.

Ideally, topic guides would have been tested in advance; however, due to the limited number of MNCs in our sample, and the non-response of the MNCs, no respondents within our target population could be interviewed to test the topic guide (Beamer, 2002). A second best option would have been to contact another company of the MNC list. However, due to the screening process and individual phone contact, the companies were overburdened and this would possibly harm further collaboration for the survey. Therefore, the topic guide was adapted during the data collection and questions regarding the employment policies at sub-national level were included for all interviewees. After having finished the data collection, the next step is data management and data analysis. Both will be discussed in the second chapter of the methodology section.

Figure 8 Overview of research steps



Chapter IV: Analysis and reflection

4.1 Introduction

The second chapter of this methodology section will give an insight into the process between finalised data collection and the report on the cases and findings. After all, data collection and a transcription of the interviews do not suffice to investigate the above mentioned proposition: social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. Therefore, this chapter will first of all report on how the data have been indexed and coded. Furthermore it will tackle data validity and reliability. Specifically, it will report on issues like non-response and selection bias. In doing so, the chapter provides transparency regarding all research steps in this thesis.

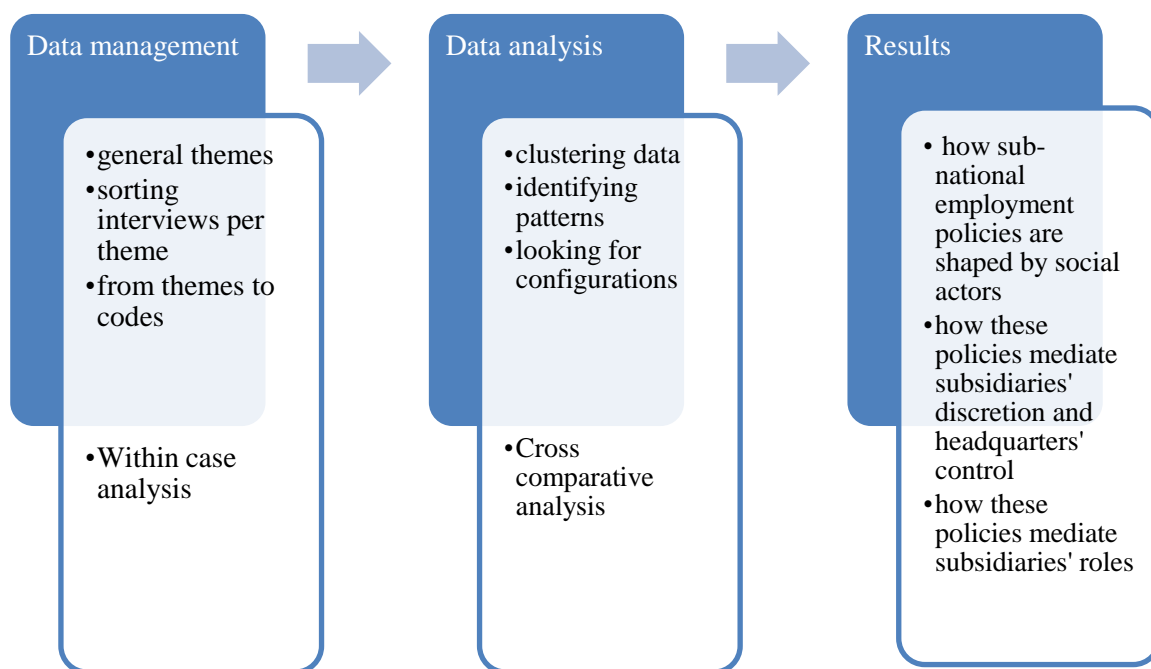
4.2 Data management and analysis

After having transcribed the interviews, an important step before data analysis is organising the data by making use of themes (Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003). The clustering of these data happened in two phases. A first phase was indexing all recurring themes based on theoretical frameworks, represented in the topic guide and in information from the interviews. During this process, hereafter called indexing, the distance between the theme and data is small. Put differently, no generalisation towards more abstract codes is being made at this moment. Rather, all quotes are labelled as specific as possible. In the process of indexing, the following guidelines were taken into account: the initial expression of the respondents is kept and interpretation is not yet at place (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Silverman, 2000). Accordingly, paragraphs that do not seem relevant at this moment were not removed from the interviews: as the index, and later on the coding process is under constant revision, these paragraphs can add to the understanding of the data in later phases of data analysis (Ritchie et al., 2003). The second phase was coding. This process refers to the capturing of more abstract dimensions. This is explained by some examples. In the process of indexing, the number of competitors and the market situation for both subsidiaries and headquarters were formulated. This resulted in four separate dimensions in the index, whereas in the codebook, these four dimensions were collected under the code 'economic conditions'. Similarly, each regulatory level for the main activity (European, national, regional) was given a separate theme, whereas one code 'regulation' collected these three levels in the codebook. The initial index consisted of 105 themes, the final codebook has 35 codes (table 21 and 22 in appendix). A prior index of more than 100 themes is no exception, as the process of coding distracts more abstract labels (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1995).

After having finalised the coding, two analyses have been executed, a within case study analysis and a cross-comparative analysis (figure 9). The within case study analysis aimed at obtaining three aspects

(Bennett & Elman, 2006): the casual mechanism within a case, the configuration between conditions to capture which values go along with a particular transfer and the conditions that are needed to cause a particular transfer. Doing so, the objective was to map all potential relevant dimensions. Based on this, the next step is a cross-comparative analysis to draw some inferences based on case study research, aimed at examining different combinations of employment policies at sub-national levels, resources on these levels and the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Therefore, an elaborated version of the method of difference and the method of agreement was used. The following logic has been applied in this regard: if two cases have different outcomes, and only one condition differs, it is accepted that this condition is sufficient to cause the outcome. Vice versa, when the outcome is similar and only one condition is alike, the condition is needed to cause the outcome. However, as formulated before, the thesis did not expect one single way of shaping employment policies at sub-national levels to mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Rather, a combination of conditions will cause a particular headquarter-subsidiary configuration or extent of subsidiaries' discretion or headquarters' control (Bennett & Elman, 2006). Therefore, this approach is elaborated upon by considering the transfer as a configuration. For doing both types of analysis, the software Nvivo has been used. This program support data management and storage of material as well as analysis but the interpretation itself has to be done by the researcher.

Figure 9 Overview of steps in data-management and analysis



Based on Ritchie and Lewis (2003)

4.3 Methodological reflection

A final paragraph reflects on the way the research has been set up. Indeed, key to all research is the importance of reliability and validity to evaluate a thesis as scientific. Reliability hereby refers to whether or not other researchers would come to similar results when all the research steps would be repeated. Accordingly, it is highly important that the researcher is transparent in describing every step of the research: the sample design and selection, the fieldwork, the analysis and the interpretation. Reliability will measure to what extent other conditions exist which can explain the findings (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). The second dimension to evaluate research relates to validity: controlling whether the thesis has investigated what it pretended to investigate. Similar to reliability, increase in validity can be obtained by paying attention to every step in the research set up. Specifically, to maximise validity, a first aspect to take into account is sample coverage and analysis of non-response. Furthermore, validity can be obtained by integrating the full range of perspectives during the interviews, by controlling similar labelling between interviewee and interviewer and by an analytical set up to be followed by other researchers. (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). The need to guarantee validity and reliability is furthermore reinforced by the nature of qualitative research. That is, in qualitative research, the researcher him or herself is a research instrument addressing codes and interpretation on raw data. As such, self-reflexivity in all research steps is required (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Following paragraphs will reflect upon the validity and reliability of the thesis by discussing topics like non-response and selection bias.

4.3.1 Reliability

As previously stated, reliability refers to whether or not other researchers would come to similar results when investigating the research topic and following similar research steps. In quantitative research, reliability is obtained through standardised procedures and methods. As the researcher in qualitative research is an important research instrument him/herself, reliability is less easily obtained. Against this background, transparency is put forward (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This means that every step within the thesis, even if adjustments are inherent to qualitative research, should be made available to other researchers. Therefore, all the steps were carefully archived as were the decisions made during the research process, in order to enable other researchers to go back to a specific decision. The way the thesis has been set up and the construction of the previous methodological chapter aim to be transparent and inform about every step and decision taken. Also the remaining empirical chapters will explain which concepts and theoretical frameworks were used and tested.

Besides this, transparency regarding the labelling and interpretation is of high importance. This transparency is crucial on two levels: 1) on the level of indexing and coding and 2) on the level of interpretation. Indeed, apart from the method used to analyse qualitative interviews (interpretative or more realist approaches), researchers have to put a method used to measure the accuracy of their interpretations in their research design (Silverman, 2000). The intercoding or interrater reliability is the most appropriate way to control this. This measurement has been set up to check whether similar codes would be linked to the same quotes by different researchers. Specifically, this measurement is most frequently used to code attitudes or the meaning of interviewees relating to the subjective experience of each interviewee (e.g. Deville, 2008) (Armstrong, Goslin, Weinman, & Marteau, 1997; Neuendorf, 2002). In the thesis, the interrater reliability has been obtained in a different way. Specifically, reliability was checked through an ongoing revision of the codebook and the themes addressed to within the interviews. Therefore, six meetings were organised with another non-affiliated researcher¹¹. The first meeting focused on the explanation of the topic and the way the codebook has been set up and constructed. Thereafter, 34 paragraphs out of 4 interviews were highlighted (some of them more than once) and the external researcher gave them a code based on the codebook. This process was organised twice in order to reflect on the codes, to avoid misunderstandings and to elaborate or reformulate codes that could lead to misinterpretation. 8 out of 36 interviews were recoded. Within this process, quotes that were given more than one code or codes that were coded differently, were discussed. For example, a quotation referring to subsidiaries of the MNC got two different codes 'contact with other companies' and 'network of the subsidiaries' because the other researcher did not know the subsidiaries belonged to the same MNC. Therefore, the code was formulated in a more general way. As a result of this consolidation, the final codebook composed of 35 codes. The intercoder reliability at the end of this process has not been calculated because the continuous adaptation of the codebook resulted in consistency in actions between researchers. In addition, the nature of the data and analysis did not fit with the interpretative method for which this reliability measure has been set up. In our research, the codes were used to describe facts and processes within MNCs, not to code the meaning social actors put on these processes (Neuendorf, 2002).

A second path for transparency and reliability is obtained by using quotes to support what is described and concluded (Silverman, 2000). So by presenting evidence in that way, readers can evaluate the interpretations of the researcher to come to similar findings. After all, the researcher uses particular theoretical and empirical knowledge to transform raw data to interpreted data. By illustrating the arguments with quotes in the following chapters, readers can decide whether they agree on the

¹¹ In this regard, special thanks go to Eva Jaspaert who was willing to dedicate some of her time to reflect upon the interpretations of the codes.

interpretations and the derived conclusions. Moreover, the results are also synthesised in tables and graphs.

4.3.2 Validity

A second dimension to evaluate the research set up, is validity. By focusing on validity, the accordance between employment policies at sub-national levels, social actors and transfer of pay and training policies and practices as intended to examine, and the collected data, is being controlled. Increase in this type of validity is generally obtained by including reflection on the different dimensions of the sample, the topic guide, the labels, the interpretation and the results (Lewis & Ritchie, 2007). These different steps will be reflected upon in the following paragraphs.

The initial step of the methodology, constructing a representative MNC population, was a first phase in increasing the validity. Specifically, MNCs' subsidiaries were screened individually to allow the presence of formal control mechanisms: a status of being a subsidiary or a global ultimate owner and the required number of employees. Based on this, the sub-national dimension was integrated based on the location of the subsidiaries in the region and the presence of two joint committees. Besides this, two different aspects needed to be checked in order to guarantee the full diversity of employment policies at sub-national levels and the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries in Belgium: 1) selection bias and 2) non-response (on the level of the cases and on the level of the sample) (King et al., 1995). In doing so, validity is maximised.

To minimise the risk on selection bias, a sample consisting of present-present cases or absent-absent cases only should be avoided (Bennett & Elman, 2006). Indeed, the most frequently mentioned selection bias is found when expectations influence the process of case and respondent selection. In these situations, particular combinations or configurations are chosen as they support the expectations. The problem of selection bias was minimised in the thesis because of the way the cases have been selected. Specifically, selecting the cases based on the presence of at least two employment policies at sub-national levels did not give insight into the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. This way, selection bias could not be introduced by the predefined propositions. Furthermore, as criteria only referred to the presence of joint committees and locations or regions, no bias was introduced by pre-selecting particular values or conditions or combinations of them (e.g. presence of training centres or social funds and a high level of discretion) as this information was not known before the data collection. Moreover, in order to prevent selection on a particular condition, variation in the conditions is needed. Some researchers even point to control of cases where the expected outcome does not occur. Research can include the contrast space, as defined by Collier and

Malony (1996), and offer negative cases or investigate the proposed relations based on a large number of cases. As the MNC population only consisted of 8 MNCs, room for adding negative cases was limited. However, variation among MNCs and between subsidiaries of the same MNCs has been observed (see chapter V: Description of the cases).

However, selection bias can also be introduced by a limited access to respondents. This might have an influence, as the refusal to participate may be associated with the conditions inserted in the research set up. The latter relate to another issue, the non-response. As mentioned earlier, only 8 MNCs fulfilled the required criteria. They were all contacted via mail and phone, but four of them refused collaboration. Therefore, it is important to control to what extent, if possible, the non-response relates to the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. In addition, reporting on non-response implies investigating whether these MNCs had particular characteristics which might influence the transfer. As 4 MNCs refused to collaborate, access to representatives or employees and managers was impossible. Therefore, newspapers articles, collective agreements and company websites were consulted to execute the non-response analysis. Based on a comparison of the explanatory conditions (table 9), two factors need to be taken into account: 1) the country of origin, as France was mentioned twice, and 2) the total number of employees. Based on empirical literature, no evidence so far revealed the French business system as a distinct system leading to a particular type of transfer. Rather, the main differences were observed between Anglo-Saxon countries (US, UK and Ireland) and other European countries (Almond et al., 2005; Edwards et al., 2007). With regard to size, it is generally found that the number of employees worldwide is related to the number of employment policies and practices and the extent of discretion, centralisation and control (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996; Kotey & Slade, 2005). However, although the size of non-response MNC1 and the MNCs in the sample differ, differences in the literature have been mainly found between small (<5000), medium (5000-29999) and large MNCs (30000+). This way, Packaging and MNC1 belong to the same category (Edwards et al., 2007b; Pulignano & Dekocker, 2014).

Table 9 Non-response

	Country of origin	Sector	Size	MNC structure
MNC1-	FR	Manufacturing	Very big MNC 195.000 employees	-
MNC2	FR	Services	Similar to packaging regarding employment figures 70.000 employees	Similar to packaging, structure is based on 5 business divisions with geographic structures
MNC3	GE	Services	Similar to packaging regarding employment size worldwide 55.000 Employees	Similar to packaging, structure is based on 5 business divisions with geographic structures
MNC4	NL	Services	Similar to ICT 6.047 employees	Similar to ICT, subsidiaries do not relate to business divisions, in one site more than one business division

Finally, next to non-response, introduced in the sample, informants or elites can also refuse to participate or cannot be present. The latter occurred in the case of Waste where no global HR manager was in place during the time of data collection. Similar for Packaging, the regional HR manager was interviewed instead of the global HR manager as a consequence of the restructuring processes in one of the business divisions. Furthermore, on the subsidiary level, the Walloon subsidiary of ICT could not be contacted. Information on this MNC was obtained from informants on the headquarters' level. In these cases, the following question is addressed: did the semi-structured interviews allow to collect the full range of perspectives?. In the situation of Waste, the role of global HR manager was taken over by the Belgian HR managers, since Belgian operations employed most employees. A similar reasoning goes for the regional manager within Packaging. Only the Walloon case of ICT might cause a problem, since the per centage of ownership is an important condition when studying the transfer in MNCs' subsidiaries. Specifically, whereas all the subsidiaries were fully owned, the Walloon case of ICT was only owned for 75 percent. In order to maximise capturing all dimensions, the per centage of ownership was integrated in the analysis afterwards.

A final way to increase validity relates to the findings by checking the interpretation that was given by the interviewer, with the interviewee. Instead of reporting back to the interviewees afterwards (limited time in case of an elite-interview), the interpretation was added during the interviews in order to make sure the interviewer understood it as it was intended. A summarising statement or question was used to wrap up the interpretation and check with the interviewee (Silverman, 2000).

4.3.3 Final reflections on methodology

Next to the two central aspects in the evaluation of social science research as scientific, some other points are worth discussing more in-depth when evaluating the thesis: 1) the personal characteristics of the interviewee and 2) the format of the interviews, because of the qualitative nature of the research.

4.3.3.1 Personal characteristics of the interviewee

First of all, central to an elite interview is that the researcher is often willing to let the interviewee tutor him or her on the topic under investigation (Dexter, 2006). Vice versa, elite interviewees are eager to counter or give more background information on the assumptions the researcher might have. As a result, contrary to other types of interviews, a lot of information was provided for by the interviewee. Welch et al. (2002) described this as a paternal attitude for the less experienced researcher. Indeed, since the interviewees hold positions that give access or that participate in a process the researcher is interested in, they have a powerful position. During the data collection process, this unequal relation changed as the researchers obtained more knowledge on the topic throughout the field interviews (Welch et al., 2002).

A second observation relates to the language used. What has been wrongly assumed at the beginning of the thesis, is that foreign managers are comfortable in expressing themselves in another language; quite the opposite was the case (Welch et al., 2002). As a consequence and in order to maximise the chances of collaboration, the native language of the respondents was put forward. As French and English were no native languages of the respondents, data gathering was expected to be more difficult since in-depth questioning, although well prepared, happens in a less spontaneous way. Surprisingly, the interviews in French and English were very elaborated because interviewees appreciated the efforts made by the interviewer and prepared a lot of details. For this preparation, some interviewees asked for the topic guide in advance. This resulted in a more structured interview, and a lot of concrete examples and new information was obtained during the interviews.

4.3.3.2 Nature of the interview

Another comment relates to the way the interviews have been conducted. First of all, as mentioned earlier, 36 interviews with 42 respondents have been organised, meaning that in some interviews more than 1 respondent was present. As the presence of others influences the interview, the prescribed way to deal with other respondents is to include them (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Silverman, 2000). The joint interviews were organised with trade union representatives on company and sector level at the same time, as it was easier to have access to the union representative after a training or a meeting (e.g. in case of shift work). The influence with regard to the amount of information was not observed; it was rather a hierarchical relation that could be identified, meaning that union representatives were looking at the representative on sector level for the correct answers or for confirmation (Weiss, 1995). In these cases, using examples seem to be relevant to come to more general descriptions.

In addition, the format of the interviews also relates to the quality of the interviews in general. As 36 interviews have been conducted, it was likely that not every interview had the same good quality. This was particularly the case for interviews with managers of formerly acquired SMEs. In two interviews, the respondents seemed not only to be frustrated, but also mentioned the limited time available for conducting the interview several times and answered with *'I already told you this'*. This way, the interviews did not add much knowledge, they only confirmed the information found during the document analysis. Related to this, some interviewees, particularly the ones on the sector level (being representatives of trade unions and employers), tended to present the process of setting up a particular policy more positively (Berry, 2002). This was mainly counterbalanced by the use of probes and the multi-actors approach of the study. The former refer to the fact that it is less likely that respondents will deviate from reality when they have to give in-depth details about the transfer of pay and training policies and practices (Mason, 2002). Furthermore, by interviewing trade unions as well as employers, information of previous interviews could be checked and counter facts could be used.

A final aspect is the use of retrospective questioning. For dynamic or changing employment policies, as assumed within our study, retrospective questioning can give an idea on different stages within the process of constructing employment policies. However, this should be treated with caution as retrospective questioning can cause recall or rationalisation or more general adaptation of the answers (Lewis, 2007). As with the previous comment, including multi-respondents maximised the collection of information on all aspects of the transfer of pay and training policies and practices. This is furthermore assured by the relatively short-term period they refer to. Moreover, the employment policies that were tackled, were still in place and (re)formed. Additional checks based on collective agreements and company websites were made. This way, detailed information on these employment

policies, on the transfer and the background characteristics of the MNC was collected. In the next chapter, this detailed information will be described for each MNC .

Chapter V: Case description

5.1 Introduction

After having coded the data and having reflected on the different steps, the final chapter of the methodological part describes the key characteristics of each MNC and its subsidiaries involved. For each MNC, four dimensions are outlined: the background characteristics of the company worldwide, the characteristics of the subsidiaries in Belgium, the relevant employment policies at sub-national levels and the transfer of pay and training policies and practices. These four dimensions are described for Waste, Food, Packaging and ICT in the following paragraphs. Based on this, the finding section will describe configurations of how social actors shape employment policies at sub-national levels to mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries.

5.2 Waste

5.2.1 Background characteristics of Waste worldwide: no formal management structure

The first multinational company is headquartered in the UK and found in the late 19th century. Next to its operations in the UK, Waste is present in Belgium, The Netherlands, Canada and France. The worldwide workforce adds up to approximately 4.000 employees and is ranked as one of the largest listed independent waste management companies. Waste focuses on waste collection, waste transport and waste treatment, and to foster this, its strategy is built on five pillars. The R&D dimension is the most important pillar, as it is key to the company's growth strategy. Country specific strategies (BE, FR, CA, NL) can, however, slightly differ from the worldwide strategy as a consequence of legislation and specific national markets. The former refers to European regulation in setting standards (minimum standards) regarding environmental regulation which (sub-) national governments should meet or can add to. The latter refers to markets in terms of the number of main competitors. Accordingly, performance differs between host countries: the Netherlands have a leading position followed by Belgium, the UK (home country) and Canada.

The presence of these different host countries and legislation for the main activity is, however, not represented in the company's structure. At the time of the data collection there were only global headquarters and national subsidiaries or sites. National headquarters had not been set up. In addition, the host countries are not represented in the board of directors and management committees as they only consist of managers and directors based in UK. Similarly, on the employee sites, no general international structure had been set up. Particularly, a European works council had not been installed, although Waste meets the criteria to do this. The absence of formal structures does, however, not mean that global management aims at having a fragmented structure. Rather, the organisational structure is

the result of a fragmented acquisition process in the different countries. Therefore Waste is labelled as having no formal management structure.

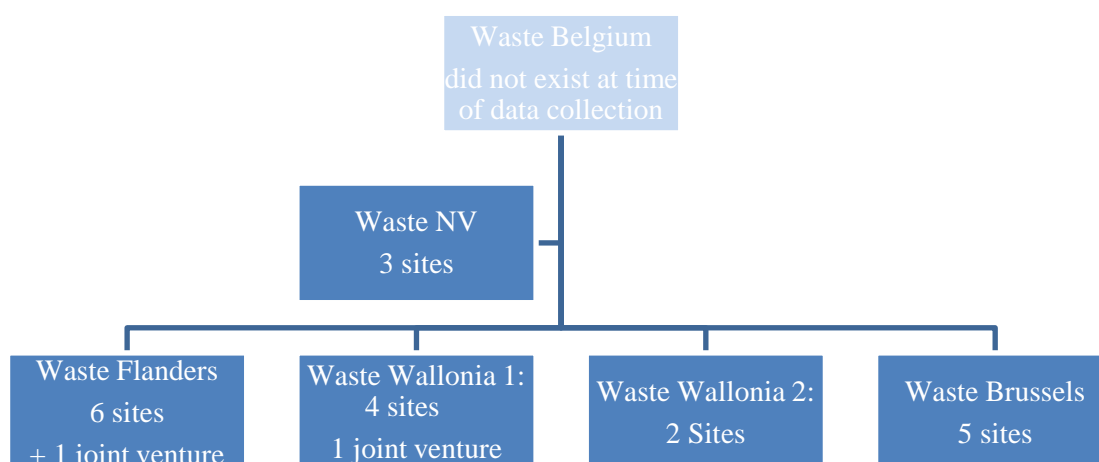
5.2.2 Background characteristics of Waste in Belgium: collection of former SME's

The overall fragmented structure is also present in Belgium. Specifically, Waste Belgium employs 1.200 employees on 22 sites. This high number of sites reflects the specific historic context within Belgium. More specifically, Waste Belgium is the result of acquisitions of former successful Belgian small and medium-sized enterprises that became part of a bigger group. Therefore, the organisational structure is described as a collection of former SMEs. For example, the sites in the Walloon region had to be sold to Waste Belgium because of the monopoly position of a current competitor. Also more recently, a number of acquisitions was done within the Flemish region, of which the most recent one happened in 2008. The market has been known as fragmented as well, since only 40 percent of the market is owned by the four largest players, all composed by former SMEs.

This structure, a collection of former SMEs, influences the way collective bargaining is organised within Waste Belgium. Specifically, 22 sites are clustered in four subsidiaries each having a separate works council and committee for prevention and protection at work (figure 10). However, the joint committees of former SMEs remain, resulting in a high number of joint committees within one subsidiary. As a consequence, it is more difficult to aim at a central uniform decision. This is explained by the fact that trade union representatives act in accordance to their members' interest. For example, an increase in meal vouchers was proposed to be introduced for all employees as fringe benefit. One representative initially opposed to this, because it would affect the taxation of its members in an unbeneficial way. This is observed not only in trade unions but also between joint committees within the same trade union. Furthermore, there is a big difference between the subsidiaries with regard to the nature of social dialogue. The latter is explained by referring to the dominant trade union in the subsidiary. In Flanders, the Christian trade union accounts for the highest number of members, whereas in the Walloon subsidiary, the socialist trade union is the most important trade union. This respectively goes along with a stronger consensus-approach with management and a conflict model. However, the union representatives recognised the importance of a Belgian policy (at the time of data collection) because no site could be favoured. In addition, all trade unions agreed on the importance of transparency. Before, when fragmented policies were applied, it was not clear which criteria were used to give an employee an increase or benefit and the criterion of favouritism had been observed to be used.

At the time of data collection, the company's structure was being transformed. This transformation started in 2009, aiming at a more centralised structure and approach. Because of regional legislation, three formal subsidiaries, one in each region resulting in Flemish, Walloon and Brussels-capital region, was put forward. Flanders had already been considered as one subsidiary and had one committee and council instead of each site having its own committee. More specifically, the structure of the company within Belgium is aimed at being based on regional axes where each subsidiary focuses on a business division or waste activity. This is part of a global strategy where the management aims to operate more as a single business than as a federation of companies. Working with one single point of contact would furthermore prevent companies from being contacted two times by other sites or subsidiaries executing similar activities. In addition, there sometimes was competition between different Waste sites. Finally, there was a need to cluster support functions. Before the restructuring process, local directors executed a number of similar tasks across sites (administration, marketing and finance). In other words, the presence of three regional directors, a national accounts team and a national human resources manager is seen as a first step towards a formal Waste Belgium. So in general, there is a trend towards centralisation which, according to the management, makes the company more efficient. This is supported by a system that encourages the sharing of ideas across the group and a new information system for comparing performance indicators between sites. However, the different subsidiaries were still labelled in accordance to the region and provinces in which they were operational. Every site had its director, who could act autonomously without guiding principles set by a higher hierarchical level. At the time of the data collection, only a monthly report on performance indicators was required.

Figure 10 Structure of Waste Belgium



5.2.3 Employment policies at sub-national levels: full package

The presence of employment policies at sub-national levels in Waste is described as a full package, since all the policies that were theoretically distinguished, are present. A first employment policy results from regional environment policies. The main activity of the company, waste collection and treatment, is highly regulated and, within Belgium, even regionalised. This means that in Belgium, three separate legislations have been set up that concern environmental issues. The Walloon region, for example, has been known as having the highest taxation for landfill compared to the Flemish and Brussels-Capital Region. Accordingly, this regionalisation affects the nature of the main activity in the different subsidiaries. Other activities within each region result in a regional specific profile; solid waste is the only activity in the whole of Belgium. In addition, the nature of waste collection causes Waste to be embedded within local economies. Being embedded in local economies occurs on the level of the municipality and on the level of the web of inter-firm relations. First of all, waste collection is not something that is geographically organised on a large scale. Rather, Waste has contracts with municipalities for waste collection. This is also reflected in the web of inter-firm relations where some of the sites are located. The industrial cleaning division, both for the site in Ghent and the site in Seraing, are located near the industry of Ghent-Zeehaven and around Cockerill/Arcelor Mittal. However, next to the physical presence on the sub-national level, obligatory training sessions are organised between regional governments and sectors. Specifically, in order to execute the main activity of waste collection and particularly for waste treatment, employees of all companies in the waste sector are required to follow a yearly training. This training is provided for by regional governments (setting the content of the training) and organised by the sector (practical organisation).

Next to the regional government and the sector, the case of Waste also reflects the presence of the inter-firm and firm level. First of all, one site of the Walloon subsidiary is part of a web of inter-firm relations. The company is the leader in a consortium with two universities, two research centres and other private companies for developing green technologies. This consortium has been funded by the Walloon regional government of which the green party (Ecolo) was part, in order to develop methods for green waste treatment. In addition, Waste Belgium also succeeded in having a 20-year public-private contract in the region of Wallonia. This support from the Walloon region has its origin in the creation of Waste in Belgium. At the time of acquisitions, the Walloon region was asked to support the different sites in order to keep the former SME's operational and profitable and in order to guarantee employment. Within the Flemish region, the subsidiary level is also present, be it in a less positive way. As Waste collection is locally operational and neighbourhoods are becoming more and more sensitive to environmental issues, a claim against the company in Flanders was filed. As a consequence, the company organised meetings during which the neighbourhood was informed on the

way the nuisance would be treated. In addition, the company was obliged to provide evidence of improvements in order to keep its license. For example, the number of complaints as a consequence of noise during morning shifts was integrated as one of the performance indicators for blue-collar workers. Also the contracts on the level of the inter-municipalities were agreed on based on improvements.

5.2.4 Transfer: no formal employment policy

A final dimension of the Waste configuration refers to the transfer. In the case of Waste, pay and training policies and practices follow the overall strategy, in the sense that policies and practices adapt to the structure of the organisation. Accordingly, Waste is not only described as ‘no overall formal management structure’, but also as ‘no overall employment policies and practices’. This results in a high level of subsidiaries’ discretion, limited control and centralisation.

The label of no formal employment policy is used because no attempts have been made by global managers or by Belgian directors to formalise the employment policies. At time of the data collection, only one attempt had been made with regard to the reward policy for all employees in Belgian operations. This attempt had been set up as part of the new structure Waste was evolving too. Specifically, the HR manager tried to make uniform remuneration instruments across operations. This standardisation only relates to benefits because basic income was regulated by collective agreements in the joint committees. For this standardisation, the HR manager made use of an initiative foreseen by the Belgian government, the collective labour agreement 90 which allows to give a group bonus to all or a specific group of employees. Initially, the goal was to install this for all the operations. However, conflicts between representatives along the regional axes arose. It was discussed that this collective bonus did not guarantee an income contrary to an increase in meal vouchers. This was further reinforced by the differences in joint committees. More specific, as mentioned before, members of one joint committee would have paid more taxes if there was an increase in meal vouchers. In addition, no general list of criteria on which the bonus could be based, could be made up because of the different nature of economic activities within the different subsidiaries and sites. As a consequence, CAO 90 was implemented, but the criteria were determined at site level by former directors of acquired SMEs.

To conclude, Waste is characterised by a limited management. Particularly, before the reforms started, the role of HR department was mainly administrative. No clear pay and training policies and practices were set up across sites. Everything that was approved for in the collective agreements, had been followed. In this regard, it is important to note that for what concerns job classification, the main competitors agreed during collective bargaining on the sector level. Specifically, the four MNCs even

negotiated additional functions, including less risky jobs in order to be able to pay less to employees on the company level. As a consequence, employees are paid less on the company level as Waste needed to pay at least what has been agreed upon in the collective agreements. For training policies, subsidiaries followed what was legally obliged. This is related to the license subsidiaries need to obtain in order to remain operational in the waste sector. Employees within this sector were required to be trained regarding safety guidelines as employers should have a license to collect and recycle particular types of waste. If employees did not follow these obligatory training sessions, they were not allowed to execute the collection and recycle of particular types of Waste. So discretion on pay and training policies is being transferred to the subsidiaries. This is first of all explained by the limited global management approach. However, even when the global or Belgian HR management would strive for a central policy, this would be hard to set up because national subsidiaries have access to the required training sessions and local directors defend their position. The latter refers to local directors (former owners of acquired SMEs) aimed at their autonomy; they feel part of their autonomy has been taken away to the upper national level. Particularly, the contrast between the period before and after the structural changes is clear. During this period, the UK determined the level of money to be spent within the different subsidiaries in Belgium. The way it was spent was not of their interest as long as local directors acted within the boundaries.

5.3 Food

5.3.1 Background characteristics of Food worldwide: open structure with dominant business division

The second company was founded in the middle of the last century and operates in the food sector. It has 17.500 employees worldwide across 4 business divisions (in the remainder referred to as food 1-4). However, the four divisions are not equally important. Specifically, the first division is the most important one as half of the employees are employed here. Furthermore, up to today, this division remains the most profitable one and is market leader in its segment. Moreover, the three other divisions are based on the first division as a consequence of the need to diversify. At the same time, the first business division supplies the other divisions. An important note with regard to this profitability and position of the first division is the European regulatory framework for production and competition. That is, in order to be able to cope with overproduction, in 2001, the European Union encouraged to stop producing on a voluntary basis. It was expected that the least efficient countries in the south of Europe would stop to produce. However, additional regulation was needed to make this happen. Consequently, additional regulation was implemented and was built up around three main rules: 1) production should be reduced with 30 percent, 2) prices should be reduced with 30 per cent

and 3) European member states are not allowed to export and have to allow an import of 3 percent from low developing countries (LDC). Next to the European Union, the WTO also restricted the levels of production in order to encourage LDC to enter the market. However, the regulation did not meet the objectives as the crops failed and LDC did not want to export to the European Union because of price limitations. Consequently, there was a high demand for the product of the first business division in the European Union. The product demand was further reinforced by a new product, ethanol, being used as biogas, (booming business) and available in large amounts on the world market. Also in Food, the expansion of the third business division required more supplies from the first business division. All these dynamics result in a shortage of the main product of the first division; therefore profit was very high and still was at the moment of the data collection.

A second characteristic of Food is its link with providers. For production and supply within each division, Food is highly dependent on farmers. Therefore, it has set up a close collaboration with neighbouring farmers in each host country and with southern American countries. The latter has been organised in order to guarantee resources during all seasons. This close collaboration with farmers is also represented in the company's shareholder structure. Specifically, about two thirds of the company's shares are owned by associations in the agricultural sector (cooperatives of farmers), which evolved towards 75 per cent in 2001. Moreover, as the company has its origin in Germany, it falls under the co-determination act. This means that the supervisory board is based on parity. The attitudes towards this co-determination has been described as constructive, not only towards the company's growth but also in case of closures. Furthermore, as the company is operational in different European countries and has more than 1.000 employees within the European Union, it fulfils the criteria for the setup of an European Works Council. Since 1996, this council is operational within Food. At the moment of the data collection, 14 representatives from 8 countries were represented in the European works council. The open way of communication is finally reinforced by the overall management structure with regard to how the business divisions are organised internally and vis-à-vis other business division. It is a matrix structure in which employees report to and are informed by multiple supervisors and can learn from one another, not only within a country but also across countries. Based on this, the structure of Food is described as an open structure with the presence of a dominant business division.

5.3.2 Background characteristics of Food in Belgium: Belgian headquarters of four business divisions

The global structure of the MNC composing four business divisions, is also reflected in Food Belgium, operational since 1989. More specifically, all the four segments are present in Belgium with

a similar division regarding size and worldwide. The first segment (Food B1) has two operational sites in Belgium. It was founded in the mid-19th century as a family owned SME. From its origin, the SME had a lot of success in the food sector as a sharp increase in growth and the setup of different sites (now part of other divisions) across Belgium show. In 1987, the company became listed on the stock exchange, with a majority of shares still family owned. In order to remain competitive in the food sector however, the group of family owners decided to sell its activities to Food.

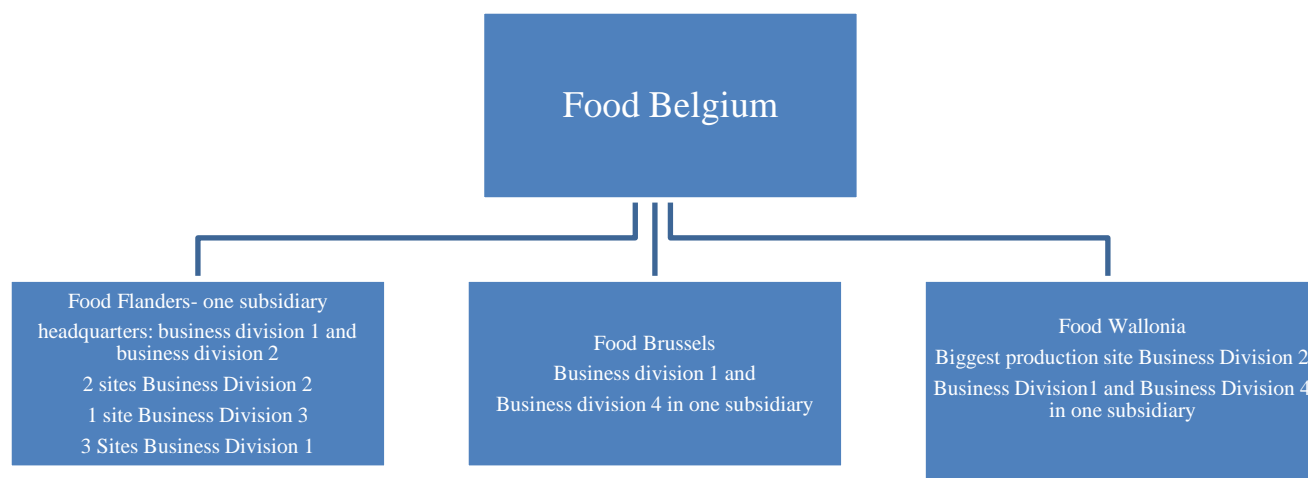
From the beginning of the acquisition onwards, Food headquarters confirmed and emphasised that the first segment would be able to develop autonomously without changing its direction or staff. More specifically, the German headquarters were only interested in 51 per cent of the company' shares because of its profit generating character. At the moment of data collection, the Belgian director of the first division was, however, German. The involvement of the German headquarters started when the European regulation regarding quota and prices were set up. In order to have a stronger impact on the strategy followed, the local managers were replaced by German managers. Along this evolution, the central responsibilities within the executive committee in Belgium were also changed. Specifically, to date, the HR function is no longer part of the executive committee in Belgium and Germany. As a consequence, the direct channel to impact or influence the executive committee was no longer available since the vice president HR was no longer a member of the supervisory board. Moreover, the headquarters wanted to focus on the creation of synergies for research and development with the formerly acquired SME. Therefore, more German presence had been installed. These synergies were aimed at evolving towards separate business divisions, each having another main activity. Similar to Food global, three business divisions are based on the first division. This is still reflected in the structure of Food Belgium today (figure 11), as different divisions are present in one subsidiary and the Belgian headquarters are located at the biggest production site of business division one (former SME).

Next to the interconnectedness of the divisions in Food Belgium, the differences between the divisions and their subsidiaries not only relate to the main activity, but also to the relation with unions. Important to note is the division of members among the three unions. In Belgium in general, the Christian union has the majority of the members, followed by the socialist union and the liberal party. Within the first business division however, the majority of the employees is member of the liberal trade union. This is explained by referring to the former SME. Specifically, it was informally known that a member card of the liberal party was a condition to work for the company (former SME). Moreover, a lot of small farmers initially worked in the company next to their farming activities. Within Belgium in this period, a lot of self-employed people were member of the liberal party, and farmers became part of the liberal trade unions. The high number of members of the liberal union in the first and second business segment spread over different subsidiaries can be explained based on

this. In the subsidiaries in the Walloon region, a high number of the socialist trade unions was being represented as well. Although the socialist unions are generally expected to adopt a more controversial approach compared to the Flemish subsidiary, Food Belgium is generally characterised by a good relation between unions and management. This is explained by the way management dealt with the closure of companies because of the European regulation mentioned earlier. The company went through a crisis before the worldwide crisis broke out. Due to the European restrictions with reduced quota and prices, the company had to close operating sites in Belgium. As there already had been a process of differentiation, the company reformed one of the operating sites for the second business division. Based on this, management and unions agreed on recruiting employees of the closed units for the newly starting units. In addition, with regard to pay levels, the company has been known to be in the top 5 of best payers. Furthermore, unions confirm that being part of a bigger group has been beneficial. Instead of the previous SME culture where social dialogue were preferably left out of the company, the rules for social dialogue are followed nowadays. This does, however, not mean that there are no conflicts or disagreements.

Despite the presence of different business divisions, the initial importance of the first business division for the development of Food is still reflected in the management structure and in the geographic locations of the subsidiaries. In practice, the office of the first business segment is the national head office of Food in Belgium. The support functions like HR and finance are initially organised within this location. More specific, the company has shared services for HR for efficiently organising training that are interesting for employees in different sites or subsidiaries. This means that the supporting functions are centralised on the level of Belgium and decentralised vis-à-vis Germany. This shared dimension is also present in the R&D centre of the first segment. The department not only delivers analyses for external customers, but also for other operating sites or subsidiaries worldwide and certainly for the other subsidiaries and operating sites of the same and other business divisions in Belgium. So at the time of data collection, there were Belgian headquarters located in the Flemish subsidiary and business divisions were spread across subsidiaries.

Figure 11 Structure of Food Belgium



5.3.3 Employment policies at sub-national levels: full package

Similar to Waste, employment policies at sub-national levels are described as a full package, because multiple policy levels are present. First of all, the management of the first business division is a member of the employers' federation and one of the representatives of the employers within the board of directors of the sector (training centre and pension fund). The HR manager emphasised the importance of being part of this centre, because for collective bargaining issues, the social partners are the same as in other committees. Remarkable to mention is that its training centre is known as a best practice among companies, by offering vocational training and services like career guidance.

The second characteristic is related to the main activity of the first business division and consequently of the other business divisions as the first one supplies the others. As previously mentioned, the materials needed for production should be delivered from the neighbouring agricultural sector in order to reduce transport costs and fresh products. To guarantee supply and production, the first business division is responsible for making agreements with farmers and transport companies. Depending on the planning, farmers are expected to deliver their products, even if they think the weather circumstances would improve their products. The newly created function, responsible for these agreements, sets prices and agreements to compensate the farmers. In addition, also for environmental issues business division one is in connection with sub-national non-profit organisations. Because the production requires a lot of water, basins that are used for agricultural activities afterwards are necessary. Furthermore, the first business division aims to create a feed, food and health cluster for the region. This is financially supported by the municipality and is possible because of the close collaboration with the nearest university. Against this background, a network organisation has been set up to bring local companies together to exchange information and experience and set up collective

(HR) services. The first business division is, due to its historical roots, a member of the network. The second business division is not initially involved as it is operational in a niche market. Accordingly it is important to keep R&D internal, because of potential linkages with main competitors. This second business division is, however, also involved in another way: it lobbied within the federal government to guarantee a market for its product, because the activity is sensitive to government regulation. Therefore, the federal government took several initiatives. After all, the creation of the second division would create job opportunities not only for the factory but also for the local economy, as it was highly dependent on a fast supply of material. Also regional governments took initiatives. The Walloon subsidiary of the second business division was embedded within the local environment as well. Because of the specific product and the innovative capacity of the Walloon subsidiary of the second business division, the Walloon government subsidised part of the infrastructure.

5.3.4 Transfer: controlled discretion

Despite the presence of more German directors as described above, the company in Belgium still has 2 HR managers. One is responsible for the first, third and fourth business division on a Belgian scale and the second HR manager is responsible for the second division internationally. The need to create an additional HR manager was put forward by the first division in Belgium, as the second division has around 1.000 employees (majority in Belgium). Moreover, the division operates in another sector so it requires another HR management. In addition, contrary to the first business segment, recruitment for the second business segment is far more difficult since they operate within a web of inter-firm relations, all aiming at the same profiles. Specifically, the first business division mainly employs blue-collar workers opposed to the second business division that mainly employs white-collar workers. Also the markets in which both segments have their operations, are completely different. The first segment is a constant market, the second one is more pioneering and has to struggle more to defend its position in the market. The embeddedness is less local as the material and the customers of the second business division are more internationally oriented. Interesting in this respect is that the R&D centre, and accordingly the growth of the second business division, emerged based on the first business division. Specifically, as a consequence of the mad cow disease, the R&D centre within food B1 was asked to produce an alternative for gelatine and grew as a separate business division.

Independent of the business divisions, the approach of Food is generally described as controlled discretion because of following reason. Contrary to Waste, the limited transfer of the German headquarters is purposive in the sense that it does not result from the acquisition of former small and medium-sized enterprises with their own logic, but from an intended strategy. Although the first (also responsible for the third and fourth business division regarding employment) and second segment have

German directors in their supervisory board, they are left quite autonomously regarding employment policy. The profitability of the business division, certainly the first division in Belgium, was initially part of an increased interest from Germany. However, it also played a major role for discretion as the subsidiary in the first business segment has 80 per cent of the market. An example of this autonomy is the following: the German headquarters wanted to install an HR tool which would require more fulltime employees in the HR department. Because HR administration is outsourced in Belgium, local HR managers showed German directors the implication of the new HR tool in Belgian operations because of Belgian social law. After this consultation, the HR tool was not implemented but the Belgian system was applied in other sites. A kind of reverse diffusion took place. Apart from the profitable position of the site, two other explanations are formulated in this regard. First of all, the Belgian subsidiary tempted to be very proactive, in particular the Belgian headquarters. They do not directly or explicitly contest new proposals. However, as they assume that there is a tendency to influence processes, they try to change as much as possible as in accordance with the way it is done in Belgium. In other words, the Belgian headquarters try to influence by anticipating. This way, it prevents that something is installed or that more German directors are 'dropped' as a consequence of explicit contesting, as is the case in other countries of the group. A third explanation is the use of consultants. As consultants are operational in other German companies, they experience that Food is not professionally organised with regard to employment issues. By pointing this out during conversations with consultants, they are encouraged to emphasise more professionalised proposals within the board in Germany. This resulted in the involvement of the Belgian HR manager in more general projects. For example, the German headquarters wanted to be an international group and Belgian operations emphasised the need to develop an international on-boarding program.

The approach within Food can be described as controlled discretion when considering the relation between the German headquarters and the Belgian subsidiaries. However, it is quite centralised within Belgium. The need for a uniform Belgian policy is explained by referring to one workforce working for the same company and the fact that one cannot have other working conditions depending on the locations negotiated by the representatives. In addition and as mentioned earlier, shared services, an indication of control, are installed at the Belgian headquarters. A uniform Belgian policy however, is not preferred. Specifically, training and pay policies are differently organised because of the above mentioned differences between the divisions. For training, employees of the first business division can make use of the well-developed training centre of the food sector for blue-collar workers. For white-collars, they can make use of the training centre across sectors or shared services. For higher profiles of the second business division, internal training sessions are organised. Regarding performance related pay, the first business division uses of the sector classification. Similar to training, the second business division uses an internal classification.

5.4 Packaging

5.4.1 Background characteristics of Packaging worldwide: structure based on centralised business divisions

The third company, Packaging, is headquartered in Sweden and employs about 44.000 employees worldwide in the paper industry. The company's organisation is based on two axes. First of all, there is a functional segmentation, meaning that there is a division based on (a group of) products. Four business divisions are present in the company. In addition, these business divisions are organised geographically. Apart from the national level, there is a supra-national level (e.g. European, Asian or American level), a global level for the division and a company level. This top-down approach occurs within every business division. Moreover managers on the same level across different business divisions do, however, not have contact within one country. Accordingly, decisions within one business division do not affect decisions in another business division. Therefore the structure of Packaging is described as a structure based on centralised business divisions. A cross-national structure is present on employee level, in terms of a European works council. This council not only functions as an instrument to inform and consult the workers representatives, it also aims at creating a common corporate culture and at decreasing the national differences between the representatives.

Although the business divisions are structured similarly, they differ in terms of competitive position. In general, the company has a strong leading position within its main market Western Europa, and Northern America and is now evolving within emerging markets as Eastern Europa, Asia and Russia. Growth is, however, mainly based on acquisitions and organic growth within the second, third and fourth business segment. Moreover, the group emphasised investments in the innovative ability of the second business division. Based on this, customer needs can be dealt with at the bottom and be spread more generally throughout the group. Complementary to its focus on innovation, the company strategically focuses on developing strong brands within this second business division. Contrary to this, the first business area is characterised by disinvestment. At the time of data collection, this division was in a process of acquisition by a British multinational.

5.4.2 Background characteristics of Packaging in Belgium: strongly differing subsidiaries

Within Belgium, three business divisions are represented by one subsidiary each, located in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia (figure 12). The Brussels subsidiary is responsible for sales in the second and third business divisions and the Walloon subsidiary therefore manages both divisions together. Whereas the first business area was in a process of merger during data collection, the other two are

described as very profitable. This is explained by the completely different economic conditions and the history of the business divisions.

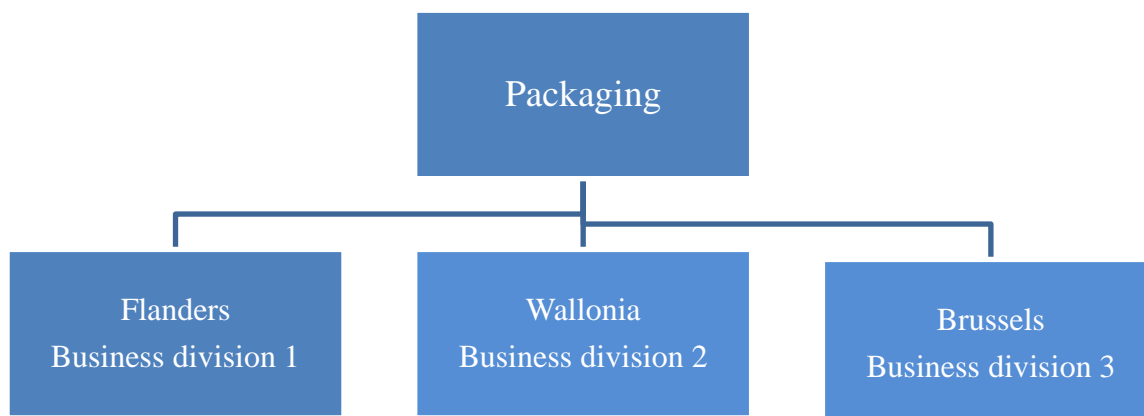
Since its origin, the second division was part of a pilot project implementing new procedures and policies, and as such has been part of the group since the start of Packaging Belgium. This does not mean that the second division has no competitors. Quite the contrary is true for this business division: it struggles to remain one of the pilot companies implementing and testing new methods of working structure within Packaging. This constant investment in new procedures and methods is very important in order to remain the market leader in a market where competitors use similar work procedures and where price setting is tight. Remarkable in this regard is that the majority of the competition comes from other subsidiaries in the same business area. This internal competition is caused by the presence of international clients and the short distance between subsidiaries (the German subsidiary in the same business division is only 90 kilometres away). In addition, this subsidiary is characterised by a good relation between subsidiary's social actors. A transparent employment policy is explanatory in this regard. For example, the subsidiary's management communicates the per centage of the bonus already achieved on a monthly basis.

The first business division on the contrary, has already been part of many large groups; it was acquired by a British group at the time of the data collection. The first division consisted of two separate sites. Both were acquired from other multinational groups and employed 340 employees in total. These sites do only exist as one legal entity. In doing so, potential customers have one single point of contact because the different sites have complementary products. Depending on the client's request, the production will happen in a particular site. The differences between the sites, however, are strongly emphasised by the employees, and therefore the first business division, the Flemish subsidiary, can hardly be considered as a whole. Specifically, before being part of a big group, one site was a family business whereas the other part had always been owned by a multinational group. Besides this difference in origin, the company culture and the preferred working conditions strongly differ among sites: employees in one site prefer to have more holidays whereas the other site prefer to have higher wages. The management already tried several times to converge both sites, but they were not successful.

Similar in all sites of the first business division, is the conflictual relation between management and trade unions. This is partially explained by the high level of unionisation. Approximately 90 per cent of the employees in the first business division is unionised. Furthermore, as the sector in which the company is operational, is very intense, production is under constant pressure. For example, the precarious situation in this business area is represented by numerous acquisitions of sites in the first business division and the collective agreement on employment and job security. Specifically, because

of a loss of profit due to strikes, a collective agreement was set up in order to prevent work interruption. This would further prevent the loss of clients going to other suppliers in case of work interruption, and the competitive position of the first business division. In return, employees asked for security after having been confronted with a number of restructuring processes in the past. In 2005, one site had already closed and in 2009 once again, 2.200 employees from this business area worldwide were dismissed because of restructuring purposes.

Figure 12 Structure of Packaging Belgium



5.4.3 Employment policies at sub-national levels: limited presence of employment policies at the sector level

The sub-national dimension for the Packaging case is limited. Contrary to the Food and Waste cases, a regional government does not provide for the required training necessary to execute the main activity. In addition, regional governments do not support exchanges between companies. For Packaging, only the sector level is of any importance. Services on the sector level are limited, however, because members only partially agree on the usefulness of collective services. The composition in terms of SMEs of the sector is explanatory for the absence of collective services. They are considered to be threatening for the majority of the sector in Flanders and Wallonia: employees sharing information is not advantageous in a tight market where companies deliver the same products and use similar procedures and production techniques. Therefore employment policies at sub-national levels are described as limited presence of employment policies at the sector level.

5.4.4 Transfer: centralisation with limited space for manoeuvre

The approach towards the subsidiaries is described as a strong hierarchical structure. Similar to the organisational structure, there is a global, supra-national and Belgian HR manager for the first and second business division. As sales are only present in the third business division, sales people are managed together with the Walloon region. In general, there is a high level of centralisation and headquarters control. However, both local managers emphasise that this strong centralisation does not prevent them from being innovative or from developing their own employment policy or specific local instruments or tools. There are indeed general values and a mission that are expected to be reflected in the way the policy is set up. Depending on the national legislative context, other instruments are, however, more interesting to set up. The structure and the approach versus the subsidiaries is centralised, with a local focus only to stimulate reverse diffusion.

With regard to employment policies, the general worldwide policy is set up within each division. For example for performance related pay, the group level decided which criteria have to be involved. At the subsidiary level, subsidiaries' management transforms these criteria into a collective bonus policy (as a specific kind of collective labour agreement (CAO 90) on performance related pay in Belgium). Higher organisational levels determine the level of pay, but how it is distributed locally, remains the responsibility of local management. The local influence on the pay policy is most visible when looking at fringe benefits, since they are highly dependent on the legislation of the different countries in which subsidiaries of business areas are operational. The pay budget has been determined globally. The only guideline given, is that it should contribute to the companies' activity. However, training policies within the first business division are rather limited. After all, training and learning is one of the first to suffer from disinvestment when a company is in a tight market and struggling to maintain its position. Based on the importance of higher organisational levels in setting the outlines for pay and training policies and practices and the fact that discretion mainly occurs to encourage reverse diffusion, the transfer is described as centralisation with limited space for manoeuvre.

5.5 ICT

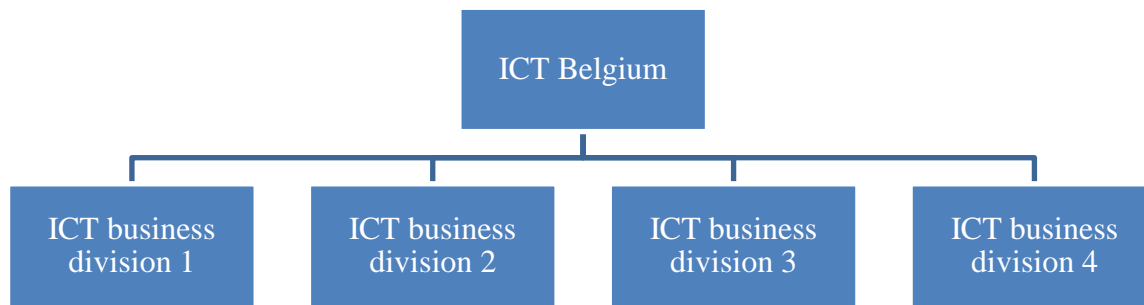
5.5.1 Background characteristics of ICT worldwide: fast growing company, hierarchical structure

The fourth and final company is a Belgian owned company operational in the ICT sector. As the company has Belgian owners, background characteristics of ICT and ICT Belgium are described together. ICT is first of all, compared to the other MNCs in the study, rather new as MNC. The initial

company has been set up 20 years ago as a collection of former SMEs. These SMEs were private companies and two of them were set up as public institutions for data management. The evolution to becoming an MNC only started in 2011 when a newly acquired company joined. As ICT unites former take-overs and SMEs, an integration process needed to be set up because similar activities were being executed. As ICT has only recently obtained its multinational character, its focus on the neighbouring countries does not come as a surprise. Specifically, ICT currently focuses on the Benelux and Eastern Europe. This is reinforced by the request of the 'acquired' customers: the local clients want their data management close by.

To serve these local customers, ICT is organised in 4 business divisions and nowadays employs 1.600 people (figure 13). As the company is the result of organic growth and acquisitions, the four business divisions reflect the main activities of former small and medium-sized enterprises. Specific for these business divisions, is that they are not attached to one geographical location. In other words, profit cannot be compared between sites or subsidiaries but only between business divisions. ICT is built up by several workplaces, like flexible offices in which employees from different divisions work on a particular project. The same divisions can also be represented in other sites. During the time of the data collection, there was not much communication between the sites. The only means of communication was the report on performance indicators. Moreover, the difference between employees working in the headquarters and employees within the different initial SMEs was still present. This is reflected in the way the headquarters are seen by the employees. For former SMEs an absence of trust has been observed because of a lack of transparency regarding labour conditions. In addition, the tendency towards integration is also seen as alienating, because directors are not present in the subsidiaries and communication is reduced to a minimum. Put differently, measurements and policies were considered as developed in the headquarters without considering the sites. Against this background, it is surprising that only 20 per cent of the workforce is unionised (and this is decreasing). For the social elections, for example, positions were hard to fill in. Consequently and in general it can be stated that there is no involvement of trade unions, only legal obligations are communicated. ICT can thus be described as a recent developed MNC with a hierarchical structure.

Figure 13 Structure of ICT



5.5.2 Employment policies at sub-national levels: relevant employment policies at sub-national levels only at the headquarters' level

As ICT is a Belgian owned MNC, it was expected that it would be far more linked with different employment policies at sub-national levels. However the sub-national dimension is mainly present for the headquarters. This is first of all reflected in the historical sharing of infrastructure with the province. Specifically, the province and current headquarters (former public company) had a similar evolution over the past 20 years. That is, ICT and the province underwent a process of modernisation. In addition, IT services of the municipality and province had also been outsourced to ICT. Furthermore, there is a close collaboration between the company headquarters and the universities with regard to hiring graduates. That is, ICT headquarters organise summer schools for recruitment reasons. Well-performing students are given the opportunity to come to a one-week recruitment seminar during their summer holidays in order to be hired by the company. This is part of a systematic approach for universities, meaning that the possibilities are shown through guest lectures, company visits and internships. The aim of these contacts is to enable ICT to identify the most promising students. However, these initiatives are only set up within the environment where the headquarters are located, not where the different sites are vested. Therefore the employment policies at sub-national levels are described as relevant sub-national levels only at headquarters level.

5.5.3 Transfer: hierarchy and centralised control for fully owned subsidiaries

Regarding pay and training policies and practices, the relation between headquarters and subsidiaries within Belgium is described as centralised. The foreign subsidiaries still operate quite autonomously but the aim is to integrate them in ICT. As a part of this integration process, the company already started to set up a company Flanders with one works council. The Walloon subsidiary still operates in a rather independent way because of the shareholder structure. Contrary to the subsidiaries in Flanders, the company has 75 per cent of the shares compared to 100 per cent for the subsidiaries in Flanders.

One subsidiary in Eastern Europe is a joint venture. So during the period of data collection there was an HR manager with responsibilities limited to Flanders; the responsible persons for the different subsidiaries report to her. Both the foreign subsidiaries and the one in the Walloon region are part of a future integration process. Therefore, at the time of the data collection, the HR manager for Belgium has been visiting these subsidiaries in order to implement the procedures used in Belgium. It concerns job classification, evaluation systems and remuneration.

With regard to the period of integration, the transfer of these pay and training policies and practices differs between sites. The initiative regarding pay on the one hand and training policy on the other hand has been developed within the Belgian headquarters. All procedures and systems developed are offered to the other subsidiaries as service. In some of them the transfer goes quite easily as local HR managers are asking for systems and procedures themselves. In other cases, the transfer is more difficult. According to the Belgian HR management, two explanations are important in this regard: the presence of the former CEO and the percentage of ownership. The former refers to the delegation of autonomy towards the headquarters, since the former founder still is the director of the subsidiary. As such, the transfer of pay and training policies and practices will be difficult or even blocked. The latter refers to the fit with other owners where no shared interests on employment are present; in this case the transfer of pay and training policies and practices is more likely to be inhibited. Based on this, ICT is described as a company with centralised control at headquarters' level, particularly if the subsidiary is fully owned.

So, the decision-making role for pay and training policies and practices is centralised within Belgium and is transferred across countries. The presence of international clients asked for this initiative. Specifically, ICT needs to have comparable functions everywhere if international teams are required. If ICT has, for example, an international client operating across countries, the goal is to have mixed teams, for example 5 located in Belgium and 5 in Eastern Europe. Therefore, it is necessary to have the same job classification, enabling employees to understand each other's responsibilities during common projects. The process of standardisation regarding job classification has been set up internationally in this regard. The operations in Eastern Europe, will be 'copy paste' of the practices in Belgium.

This does not mean that the local market is left out. A similar benchmark study is done for Eastern Europe as well. This mainly relates to fringe benefits. For example, generally a car is not given to employees, while this is the case in Belgium because of the beneficial tax policy at the time of the data collection. This means that it is not a blind and complete copy paste. Labour markets are different as well. As Eastern European countries are far less confronted with a lack of IT graduates, compensation and benefits differ. Small adaptations within the job classification system are possible because of the

need to remain competitive. For what concerns training, the centralisation tendency differs slightly as a centralised training policy was still being developed. Specifically, at the moment of the data collection, there was a formal and an informal policy. The latter refers to the possibility of employees to ask their superior to be able to attend a training. The formal aspect is aimed at systematising these initiatives. When, for example, a large group of employees want to follow a particular training, the training will be organised internally but not necessary by internal trainers. ICT uses both public and private partners for training depending on its specificity. The unions were not involved in the training policy, they just monitor or check whether the days, as foreseen in the collective agreement, are taken up.

After having described all background characteristics, employment policies at sub-national levels and the transfer of pay and training policies and practices of each MNC (table 10), the next part (Part III) will integrate all the information to investigate configurations between these three dimensions. Specifically, Part III contains four chapters investigating following questions:

- Chapter VI: How do subsidiaries' social actors shape employment policies at sub-national levels?
- Chapter VII: How do employment policies at multiple sub-national levels affect centralisation, headquarters' control and subsidiaries' discretion?
- Chapter VIII: How do employment policies at multiple sub-national levels affect headquarters-subsidiary configurations and subsidiaries' roles?
- Chapter IX: Do subsidiaries' social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels?

Table 10 Overview of MNCs' main characteristics

Country of origin	Waste		Food		Packaging		ICT	
	UK		Germany		Sweden		Belgium	
Size	The company employs 4.000 employees in five countries, UK, Belgium, France, The Netherlands and Canada		The company has 17.500 employees worldwide and is operational in 34 countries. Important remark is that employees are very spread, it composes of rather small sites in different countries		The company counts 44.000 employees and is operational in 18 countries		The company employs 1.600 employees in 3 European countries	
Sector	Waste industry (waste collection, waste transport and treatment of waste)		Food industry		Paper industry		IT sector	
Background	<p>Growth of company mainly through acquisitions</p> <p>The main activity of the company is strongly regulated on a European as well as on a sub-national level</p> <p>No European Works council (though conditions are fulfilled)</p> <p>The company is a collection of mainly former SMEs in the different countries. An SME culture is still present, a lot of people remain in the function for 15-20 years or have an overall responsibility (e.g. site director)</p>		<p>The growth of the company is based on diversification of the main product. Because of European quota, diversification was needed.</p> <p>55% of the companies' shares are held by farmers.</p> <p>European works council</p>		<p>Growth of company is based on acquisition and organic growth</p> <p>Well-developed European Works Council, used as an instrument to inform and consult</p>		<p>The company has only been set up 20 years ago and main focus in on the Benelux and Eastern Europe.</p> <p>Operations outside Belgium only exist as from 2006 onwards</p>	

Organisational structure	Waste	Food	Packaging	ICT
	<p>The company has no formal structure, the company can be described as a federation of companies</p>	<p>The company has four business segments of which one is the original main segment and three others were added because of the need for diversification</p>	<p>The company is organised based on two axes, activities and geographical axe. It counts four business segments.</p> <p>The supra national level is considered as more important than national levels(e.g. European). There are no linkages between the separate divisions</p>	<p>The company is structured based on 5 activities in which acquisitions have taken place.</p> <p>The nature of the main activity causes the company not to have particular activities attached to a particular location.</p>
Economic situation	<p>The market of waste treatment and collection is a very competitive and tight market</p> <p>Contracts with municipalities or companies are not easy to obtain</p> <p>Depending on the country, there are 1 to 6 competitors</p> <p>Depending on the activity, the market is very local (waste collection of municipalities) or national (industrial cleaning)</p>	<p>The company is doing very well as they are the market leader in the main segment. Due to a shortage of products because of European quota, they make a lot of profit</p>	<p>Main market focus is in Western Europe and Northern America but has now emerging markets in Eastern Europe and Asia. One of the business divisions has been taken over during the process of data collection.</p> <p>The market of paper industry is very competitive</p>	<p>The company is doing very well, is still in a fast growing process based on acquisitions and organic growth. The company is top 3 in Belgium within its market segment.</p> <p>The company focuses on national markets, subsidiaries are close to the clients.</p>

	Waste	Food	Packaging	ICT
Sub-national dimension	<p>Vocational training is organised by regional governments in collaboration with the sector federations</p> <p>The main activity of Waste is locally: waste collection of municipalities and clusters of companies</p> <p>The Walloon region is a leading company in a web of inter-firm relations</p>	<p>Part of the board of directors of the training centre and pension fund on the sector level</p> <p>Suppliers are farmers, need to be close by, special function created to negotiate with farmers</p> <p>Involved in setting up a Food Cluster</p>	<p>Only recently discussion within the employers federation have been set up to organise vocational training collectively</p>	<p>Link with high school to recruit recent graduated students, only on the headquarters level</p>
Headquarters subsidiary configuration	Heterarchy	Semi-hierarchy	Hierarchy	Hierarchy
Subsidiary discretion centralisation and headquarters control	Decentralised approach but no organized decentralisation	Controlled decentralised approach	Centralised	Centralised

Part III: Findings

The third part will use the case studies as described above to investigate configurations of employment policies at sub-national levels, subsidiaries' social actors and the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Specifically, the general research question, do social actors shape employment policies at multiple sub-national levels to mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices, is split up into two research propositions: 1) subsidiaries' social actors shape employment policies at sub-national levels if there are resources at these multiple levels to align these policies with their aims 2) employment policies at sub-national levels will affect the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries if these policies affect MNCs' competitive advantage. To investigate the first proposition, the first chapter of the findings (Chapter VI) will investigate how subsidiaries' social actors shape employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. Employment policies and resources will be observed on four distinct levels, but not always in the way expected: the regional, the sector, the web of inter-firm relations and the company level. Specifically, for the regional and company level, informal relations between employers and politicians and between employees and employers were also found to be used as resources. Thereafter, the second (chapter VII) and third chapter (VIII) of the findings section will build upon these findings by investigating how these employment policies at sub-national levels affect the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Within these chapters, following previous studies on the topic, a distinction is made between headquarters' control, centralisation and subsidiaries' discretion, and headquarters-subsidiary configurations. As the focus on employment policies at multiple sub-national levels assumes divergent pay and training policies and practices at the subsidiary level, the business system approach and the resource-based view are respectively used as a theoretical point of departure within chapters VII and VIII (see Chapter I, p.33, table 2). The part on the findings ends with a summarising chapter (chapter IX) answering the main research proposition by making use of the theoretical frameworks and the case study evidence of chapters VI, VII and VIII.

Chapter VI: How do social actors shape employment policies at multiple sub-national levels?

This chapter is based on :

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Dekocker, V. (in press). When do social actors shape sub-national employment policies? *Economic and Industrial Democracy*. doi: 10.1177/0143831X14550422. (IF:0.642)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates when subsidiaries' social actors (employees and employers and their representative organisations) shape employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. The chapter, based on literature presented in chapter I, argues that there are two key factors influencing their ability to contribute in constructing employment policies at multiple sub-national levels: 1) the presence of resources at these sub-national levels and 2) the complementarity between these levels. In other words, subsidiaries' social actors engage in these levels if there are resources available at multiple sub-national levels that enable them to shape these policies in line with their aims. Adapted or newly formed policies in turn offer resources to subsidiaries' social actors to engage in these levels. So a continuous interaction between subsidiaries' social actors and employment policies at multiple sub-national levels is assumed. Consequently, the extent of social actors' engagement depends on the specific historical development of the sub-national levels and the role taken up by social actors within this development.

In order to investigate how social actors within MNCs contribute to employment policies at sub-national levels, the remainder of chapter is organised as follows. First this chapter briefly repeats how employment policies at sub-national levels have been defined. Thereafter it considers theoretically how social actors in MNCs can contribute to the shaping of employment policies at sub-national levels. Based here on, the next section formulates propositions for the Belgian case. Following that, the amount of diversity found with regard to the subsidiaries' social actors and their roles will be described. To conclude, the chapter briefly presents some concluding remarks to take into account.

6.2 Employment policies at sub-national levels and social actors within MNCs

6.2.1 What are employment policies at sub-national levels?

Based on studies in economic geography, studies focusing on institutional variance and the specific Belgian institutional context, the study distinguishes between three types of employment policies at sub-national levels: regional employment policies, inter-firm employment policies and company specific employment policies (Crouch et al., 2009; Lane & Wood, 2009). Each of these policies and their evolution will be described in turn.

Regional employment policies. As described earlier, regional employment policies refer to formal constitutions or regulations applicable in a particular area or territory (Lane & Wood, 2009). Regional

policy is hereby considered as a political construction closely connected to national politics (Trigilia, 1991). In this respect, it is an intermediate regulatory level between the national and the local level (e.g. provinces and municipalities). Its aim is to contribute to the economic development of a particular region within a country (Halkier & Danson, 1997). Consequently employment policies between regions can differ and other socio-economic profiles arise with varying priorities in each region. These other profiles are particularly the case when regional governments are influenced by interest groups or social actors within MNCs (Trigilia, 1991). Accordingly differing regional contexts and employment policies will in turn increase divergence between regions (Lane & Wood, 2009; Phelps et al., 2003; Trigilia, 1991).

Inter-firm employment policies. The second level, inter-firm employment policies refer to informal employment policies within industrial districts, local production systems, regional economies or territorial clusters. These policies are typically set up by agglomerations of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). Key to these agglomerations is the specialisation in a particular industry sector and the presence of cooperation based on tacit knowledge and informal social norms (Beccatini, 1990; Pyke & Sengenbenger, 1992). This specialisation is supported by employment policies that focus on internal labour market issues such as good labour conditions, training and aspects of flexibility (Crouch et al., 2009). So policies at this level are valuable in encouraging companies' growth and development through differentiation and specialisation (You & Wilkinson, 1994). As such, they foster a high level of innovation and adaptive capacity to changing environments encouraged by internal labour markets. In this respect, policy-making at the inter-firm level had long been considered as an alternative form to the fordist mode of production. (Sforzi, 2002). Inter-firm employment policies have indeed been observed to emphasise internal labour market as being important in the development of this adaptive capacity (Del Ottati, 2002).

Company-specific employment policies. Finally, company-specific employment policies function at the subsidiary level. They can be shaped by collective agreements, works councils and co-determination rights in the host country (Almond et al., 2005). Deviation from prescribed policies can be the result of the prior existence of local policies that have survived over time (Lane & Wood, 2009). Indeed, subsidiaries can be former SMEs in which the employment policies of the previously independent company remain. This occurs because of their ability to attract and keep employees (Lane & Wood, 2009). In addition management and trade unions in high performing subsidiaries can leverage this performance quality to advocate for a particular employment policy (Anderson et al., 2007; Pulignano, 2006).

Two remarks can be made regarding these three employment policies at sub-national levels. These three levels are first of all interlinked as subsidiaries are operating in a given regional government and

belong to a particular inter-firm level. Similarly clusters of companies can be located in more than one regional government. The occurrence of cross-border clustering depends however on the way the political and socio-economic borders are reinforcing one another. Specifically, if political borders coincide the socio-economic ones, cross-border ties are few and companies will cluster in one regional government. If this is not the case, networks have been found to operate across borders (Strihan, 2008). Second, these three levels are not static so employment policies at sub-national levels can and do evolve over time. Regional employment policies for example are in many cases no longer considered as an intermediate level but as the primary policy-making level (Burroni, 2014; Hudson, 2007). Indeed in many European countries, a delegation of responsibility from the national state towards lower political levels with regard to employment policies has been observed (Cognard, 2011). This trend is supported by the increasing presence of regional development agencies designed to promote indigenous economic development. The latter occurs through additional means like advice, financial support and infrastructure (Burroni, 2014; Halkier & Danson, 1997). So the study of regional employment policies must encompass the political parties involved in the regional government but also governmental agencies.

In addition, the original definition of inter-firm employment policies has been challenged as MNCs also gained access to these clusters (Coro & Grandinetti, 2001). As a result, SMEs were no longer the only corporate participants at the inter-firm level. Furthermore, within this change, only a part of the production process remained endogenous as external products and services entered the inter-firm level. However the companies actively involved at the inter-firm level generally remain quite close to each other geographically. Specifically, despite modern IT facilities, informal interaction between entrepreneurs occurs more often when they are near each other, thus enhancing the diffusion of employment policies (Molina-Morales & Martinez-Fernandez, 2008). In addition, access to employment services reduces the cost of looking for new ideas, knowledge or other relevant information (Coro & Grandinetti, 2001; Molina-Morales & Martinez-Fernandez, 2008; Pyke & Sengenberger, 1992). This convenient access is particularly important as employees are the least mobile production factor within companies (Meyer et al., 2011; Ter Wal & Boschma, 2011). Furthermore, the notion of trust among companies remains strong at the inter-firm level. The nature of institutions to install trust evolved however. More formal institutions like training institutions, knowledge exchange or information have been set up in order to reflect their common interest (Molina-Morales & Martinez-Fernandez, 2008). So the inter-firm employment policies are still largely characterised by internal labour markets for geographically clustered groups of companies, even though their common institutions have become more formalised and larger companies are part of the inter-firm level as well.

Finally the company-specific level has also been subjected to change. Systems of collective bargaining in many countries have lost their previous inclusiveness. Indeed, employment policies have been observed to be fragmented and segmented. The latter is caused by an increasing importance of the company level for negotiation rather than more collectively (Holst, 2013). In addition the normative character of labour institutions has changed as they are increasingly seen as voluntary organisations (Holst, 2013). As such, company-specific employment policies have greater potential to become diversified. The above paragraphs clearly illustrate that the three employment policies have changed over time. Specifically, regional employment policies overall have become more elaborated, inter-firm employment policies have become more formalised and company-specific employment policies have become more fragmented. The evolution of policies at these levels results from a continuous interaction between these policy levels and social actors. How this interaction is assumed to take place, will be described in greater detail in the next section.

6.2.2 Dynamic sub-national levels

In this chapter, the aim is to investigate how social actors within the spheres of capital, labour and finance shape employment policies at sub-national levels (Amable & Palombarini, 2008; Crouch et al., 2009; Morgan, 2009). Changes in employment policies are hereby expected to be produced by endogenous social actors operating within different path-dependent systems (Crouch & Farrell, 2004). More specifically, social actors behave as institutional entrepreneurs to cope with changing demands and expectations from the environment in which they are operational (Crouch, 2005). Consequently, other employment policies at sub-national levels or combinations of policies emerge.

These (combinations of) policies are however not just the result of social actors shaping the institutional environment in line with their aims. Rather they imply a creative reinterpretation of resources at the sub-national levels by social actors within MNCs (Heidenreich, 2012). Endogenous creation of employment policies at sub-national levels is then rooted in the levels themselves as actors use their resources (like seats on the advisory boards of regional development agencies or the system of collective bargaining) to influence policy development (Musyck, 1995). The result is the creation of employment policies which in return shape MNCs' activities (transfer in MNCs). Furthermore newly or adapted policies provide the actors with additional resources to reshape employment policies (Gibbon et al., 2008; Hervás-Olliver & Albors-Garrigos, 2007). Cantwell et al. (2010) refer in this respect to co-evolution between the aims of social actors and policies at sub-national levels. Core to this co-evolution is the continuous interaction between their value adding activities and the policies that sustain these activities.

Engagement in employment policies at sub-national levels does however, not depend on the presence of specific resources at one level. Even if a policy at one sub-national level offers limited resources, engagement in policies at sub-national levels is possible because of employment policies at complementary sub-national levels. In this respect, employment policies are expected to be complementary if there are aspects of two or more levels that enhance and maintain one another. This occurs through a reinforcing or compensating effect for each other or for the national level. This means respectively that the multiple levels are compatible or that one level is somehow supplementary and makes up for the deficiencies of the other (Deeg, 2009; Lane & Wood, 2009). In addition, complementarity between levels can be observed only if it contributes to social actors' employment aims. As such these policies influence the strategic choices of social actors. If this is not the case, actors will not express their engagement in employment policies at sub-national levels (Deeg, 2009; Reid & Musyck, 2000).

Based here on subsidiaries' social actors (employees and employers and their representative organisations) are expected to engage at a given sub-national level when the specific historical context enables the social actors to have resources by which to intervene at the level. In addition, it is expected that high levels of engagement will be observed when multiple resources are complementary- that is, that the engagement will allow them to set up the employment policies that they desire to establish (Meyer et al., 2011). The next paragraph will briefly repeat the employment policies at sub-national levels in Belgium and how they offer resources enabling social actors to become engaged. As previously mentioned, the inter-firm level is hereby understood in two dimensions: the sector level and the web of inter-firm relations.

6.2.3 Employment policies at sub-national levels in Belgium

The Belgian institutional context can be described in terms of employment policy levels at four distinct levels each offering social actors resources to engage at these levels. They will be described one after the other. State reforms result first of all in the creation of three regional governments. Specifically, these governments are responsible for the creation of regional training bodies (public as well as private), regional incentives to promote vocational training of some target groups or regional training cheques for companies. Also the content of obligatory training sessions for specific economic activities are regionally determined. In order to set up these initiatives, regional government are supported by regional development agencies. These agencies compose of an advisory board based on parity meaning that representatives of both employers and employees are represented. As the number of agencies, committees and advisory boards has increased with state reforms, more resources have

been given to social actors. Therefore, social actors are expected to shape employment policies if they are represented on these advisory boards.

Secondly, the inter-firm level entails employment policies at the level of the sector. All these institutions of the sector, be it training institutions or social funds have similar structures to those of the regional governments. So social actors can shape this level too if they are the representatives for the sector on the advisory boards of training centres and social funds. Thirdly, a second form of inter-firm employment policies results from clusters around locations of shared economic interest. These inter-firm policies can be supported by regional policies. Specifically the latter can project future needs and designate funding for innovative employment measures in order to address the shortages of skilled employees within these webs of inter-firm relations (Musyck, 1995; Reid & Musyck, 2000). How these employment policies within webs of inter-firm relations are determined depend heavily on the presence of a leading firm. The type of firm (most of the time a MNC) is found to be frequently in charge of dividing up the resources (Gibbon et al., 2008). In this respect, subsidiaries' social actors are expected to shape employment policies within the web of inter-firm relations.

Finally on the company level, three mechanisms, the works council, committee for prevention and safety at work and union representative, can be used. The two former mechanisms are based on parity. This means that the social actors can use them to shape employment policies in accordance with their aims. Alternatively, social actors can also bypass the resources, particularly the ones that are part of the system of collective bargaining and industrial relations. In these cases, other policy domains are put forward to install particular employment policies. Above mentioned levels, however, are not independent of each other. Regional governments can support sectors or webs of inter-firm relations in achieving desired employment policies. The company level can add to what has been agreed upon at the level of the joint committee. In this way, it is expected that resources at sub-national levels alone will not fully explain the extent of actors' engagement. Complementarity between levels also explains how social actors shape employment policies at sub-national levels. Followings paragraphs will investigate how the presence of resources at multiple levels are used to shape employment policies. The first section describes resources and strategies of subsidiaries' social actors. The second part reports on common patterns or configurations within MNCs.

6.3 How do subsidiaries' social actors shape employment policies at sub-national levels?

6.3.1 Within case study analysis- resources at sub-national levels

The observations of resources at multiple sub-national levels in our case studies varied. The cases Food and Waste illustrated the presence of resources at multiple sub-national levels to engage at these levels. For ICT the opposite was found, no resources at sub-national levels were observed. Packaging was an intermediate case, there are some resources at sub-national levels used but not to the extent of Food and Waste. The cases will be discussed individually.

Waste-resources at multiple sub-national levels. As previously described, Waste is a UK-owned company operating in the waste collection and treatment sector. It comprises former SMEs clustered in a Flemish, Walloon and Brussels-based subsidiary and employs mainly blue-collar workers. Not only does the former SMEs' - character link Waste closely to the sub-national levels, but so also does the main activity. Specifically, waste collection is organised within villages and cities as well as in webs of inter-firm relations. Accordingly the sub-national dimension is emphasised because of the contracts with local governments and companies. Every two years, these contracts are renegotiated and Waste must compete with three other MNCs for the new contract. Therefore, the initial aim of the Belgian employment policy is to (re) train employees in order to execute the main activity and prevent work interruptions. For this all employees need to follow obligatory vocational training sessions for employees working in this sector. Put it differently if employees of Waste do not attend the sessions, they are not allowed to work like any other blue-collar worker in the sector. As vocational training is one of the policy domains that have become regionalised through state reforms, regional governments and their agencies are responsible for organising the obligatory sessions. The boards of these agencies are based on parity and therefore it is expected that social actors engage at this level. However employers' federations also apply informal means for engagement. These informal resources build upon personal relations of trust with politicians that sometimes remain for more than one government. In this respect, employers' federation become a resource actively involved in shaping the organisation of vocational training because of its informal relations:

'For us it is much more efficient to go to a Cabinet, as we know the employees, or the minister. If we can convince them, it will be approved. This means that you do not work through parliament, no, we have contacts with several parliamentarians and that enables us to raise issues in parliament if we find a Minister is not sufficiently answering our letters. So yes a lot of energy is invested in the relationships with cabinets and personal contacts, all behind the scenes. And through these contacts

behind the scenes, occasionally, relationship of trust is created (Waste, Representative of employers' federation).

So vocational training is a regionalised policy domain where the employers' federations of Waste are influential. In this way, the sector level is already involved. Moreover these vocational training sessions are in reality organised in collaboration with the sector where the employers' federations is responsible for organising them. In this respect, two levels (the regional government and the joint committee) are observed to be complementary to each other and to Waste's own employment policy. At the same time these policy levels are important for the employers' federations as well, as the federations can introduce an employer's message: The following quote illustrate this complementarity and the sub-national resource involved:

'Employees complete these 35 hours of vocational training within five years. We are responsible for the organisation of the courses but governments should push companies to send their employees otherwise we will have a bottle neck in the last year. At the same time, we of course want to insert the employer's message. Not that we want to brainwash them into thinking that the rule is white but we think it is actually black that absolutely cannot be the case. It's about business, where an employee is supposed to act in the interests of the company' (Waste, Representative of employers' federation)

Besides the involvement of the sector for the training policy, the level of the joint committee was also involved in shaping pay policies. Specifically a more detailed job classification for blue-collar workers was put forward to decrease hourly wage for less risky jobs. Agreements on the joint committee level for this adapted classification were easily obtained among four MNCs. Despite their market share of 40 per cent, their proposal was inserted in a collective agreement for the sector. In this way Waste was able to undermine or decrease labour conditions on the company level because companies have to pay at least what has been decided within the collective agreements. At the same time, this change left more room on the subsidiary or site level. Specifically, the complementarity between sector and company allows the existence of different fringe benefits between sites of Waste. This is important regarding the main activity and the historic specific evolution of Waste. The former refers to existing fringe benefits that has maintained the constructive relation with trade unions that sought to protect their acquired benefits. As Waste depends on long-term contracts with villages and webs of inter-firm relations in a tight market, work interruptions could indeed threaten the prolongation of the contracts. As such, Waste benefitted from having different policies. The latter refers to the former composition of Waste, Waste composes of former SMEs. In most cases the subsidiaries were still directed by the former owner and informal bargaining occurred with former social partners. As such, instead of standardising the policies at the subsidiary or the national level, former site directors were given this responsibility resulting in site-specific employment policies. As Waste's HR manager said,

'Rather than focusing on a Belgian policy, former directors, who are still in place, prefer to do it their own way as they have been used to it' (Waste, HR manager)

A final complementarity was found between regional employment policies and the webs of inter-firm relations. Specifically, all subsidiaries of Waste were encouraged to engage in new greener methods of waste treatment in order to remain competitive. The Walloon subsidiary responsible for cleaning around the communities of Liege and Verviers, saw in the coalition of the Walloon government an additional resource by which to set up a cluster of green waste companies. As the green party was part of the Walloon coalition, the coalition was especially sensitive to environmental issues. Furthermore it was willing to fund employment policies that would invest in green treatment. This resulted in the formation of a training and competence centre for employees to learn these new techniques which were also available for the surrounding companies. In this way, besides the obligatory training, Waste Walloon could meet future employee skill needs.

Food-resources at sub-national levels. Food is a German-owned company with four business divisions in Flanders as well as in Wallonia. The Brussels subsidiary employs the sales force for all divisions. Differences in engagement were found between the business divisions because of the presence of resources and complementarity. In this regard it is important to note the historical evolution of both divisions. The first business division (also managing the third and fourth division), mainly employing blue-collar workers, has existed for 200 years and is characterised by long-term relations with clients and suppliers. In contrast, the second is a spin-off that mainly employs white-collar workers and has been in existence since 2007. This difference in historical development has contributed to the divisions' amount of resources at sub-national levels. Specifically, the HR manager of the first business division, who has held the post for 11 years, is a member of the advisory board of the regional agency, the social fund and the training centre. As such he has three resources at sub-national levels to his disposal to shape employment policies in line with the aims of the first business division. These aims include cost reduction in the packaging division, multiple skill development of employees and attracting and retaining skilled employees.

Engagement in these policies at these sub-national levels resulted first of all in a simulation company for blue-collars workers in the food sector. Because of the presence of this company, blue-collar workers could practice on packaging for food products. This simulation company contributed to the company-specific policy as the packaging department still suffers from higher costs within the company. On the level of the joint committee, the training aims of multi-employability were further supported by trade unions and other employers within the advisory board of the training institutes. Specifically employees' representatives were concerned about the consequences of company

restructuring for employees' job security issues, while local management suffered from employees being able to operate only one machine. Therefore both parties are in favour of more services:

'Employers give enough money to the sector institute to develop a variety of training programs aiming at involving 80 to 90 per cent of the employees of the sector. It has been said that our sector training institute is a best practice.' (Food, Director employers' federation)

Furthermore, similar to the cases of Waste, the first business division had pay policies that differed from those of other subsidiaries within the MNC. Being a former SME, the company retained a family business character and was described as taking good care of its employees. As the HR manager was part of different committees, this policy aim shaped actions at the joint committee level. Specifically pension contributions for all employees within the Food sector were proposed by the HR manager of Food. In this way, a complementary effect between the joint committee and the company level remained visible as the company made contributions (to the social fund) even after retirement. These additional contributions were not present for other companies in the sector. In this respect Food was still able to attract many employees, often through their family members who were already employed within the company.

The above-mentioned employment policies at sub-national levels are opposed to the aims of the training and pay policies within the second division, which are established internally. However, recently the municipality in Flanders has announced support for the creation of a food business cluster in cooperation with the university and local SMEs. This will give the other business divisions future resources at sub-national levels to shape employment policies needed to improve their performance in research and development. In other words, the first business division has had its own system of contacts with surrounding companies and is now using this capacity both to reinforce future specialisation and to create a local food cluster for the other three, more recently created business divisions. At the time of data collection, the involvement was however still limited because of competitive reasons.

Packaging- Limited resources at sub-national levels. Packaging has a Swedish headquarters and its three business divisions are represented in three subsidiaries in Belgium. The Walloon subsidiary is a pilot company where international employment policies of the division are internally tested. It also manages the Brussels division. Because of the nature as a pilot company, resources at sub-national levels are less relevant for the Walloon subsidiary because of its internal focus.

In the case of Flanders, the employment policy focused on skill development and on attracting and keeping skilled employees. Both aspects were key to remain competitive. Particularly the packaging

division of the Flemish subsidiary has been characterised by a tight market and extensive restructuring. In fact, during time of data collection, the Flemish subsidiary was taken over by a new parent company. Against this background, local management sought to use the system of collective bargaining but Packaging Flanders was successful in doing so only with regard to pay policy. Specifically the MNCs within the employers' federation attempted to establish a pay package adjusted to the larger SME and not to the smaller one. Moreover, the companies agreed that the higher performing companies or MNCs could add to this pay package. As such the MNCs succeeded in offering a more beneficial pay package in order to attract key employees in areas where a shortage existed:

'There was almost an explosion between the bigger and the smaller companies and then we said we need a new system; we need a system to negotiate agreement on terms aligned with those of the big SME. Then you can say that international companies can do something on top of that but that should be a very small group.' (Packaging, Representative of employers' federation)

Engaging at the level of the sector did not work out with regard to training though the employers' federation was striving to set up their own training centre. However SMEs making up 80 per cent of the sector, refused to contribute to the collective fund. They state that collective training would not enable to offer more competitive training since employees of other companies would be trained as well:

'Until this year, our members were not willing to invest in training on a sector level as it is a tight market and they are all competitors. It took a lot of effort to convince the board of directors about the relevance of training and the possibilities on the sector level.' (Packaging, Director of employers' federation)

The case of Packaging Flanders furthermore illustrates that trade unions can make use of the specific historical background of the subsidiaries. The Flemish subsidiary of Packaging comprises two sites characterised by a high number of strikes. As the sites are formally one subsidiary, global and Belgian management tried to set up a policy on working hours, number of holidays and pay level. However employees of the second site have historically preferred extra holidays rather than wage increases whereas the first site preferred the opposite. Although global and local management wanted to standardise policy, trade unions used the preference for these different instruments to guarantee employment. For management, production is of particular importance given the tight market in which the subsidiary is operating. So trade unions used the system of collective bargaining at the subsidiary level to maintain the fringe benefits. In this regard, Packaging differs from the case of Waste where fringe benefits were agreed upon informally rather than through the system of collective bargaining.

ICT-no resources at sub-national levels. ICT is a fast-growing Belgian- owned MNC that began to internationalise only in 2011. In this respect it should not come as a surprise that ICT is less involved in employment policies at sub-national levels as previous cases have shown the importance of the specific historical context of resources. Particularly neither management nor trade unions are represented in the advisory boards of the regional development agencies or sector funds or centres. However ICT composes of former Belgian SMEs which could have been engaged before being part of ICT, though this was not the case. Based here on, it is concluded that the absence of engagement is mainly explained by the lack of fit with ICT's employment policies and practices regarding pay as well as training policies:

'The employers' organisation set minimum standards; what they present is really basic. There are companies that completely take this over. What we have implemented is a lot more than what the employers' organisation presents, it is much more detailed.' (ICT, HR manager)

'The sector training centre is mainly used for the support functions; for ICT the MNCs and its subsidiaries needs specific programs like those offered by IBM or Cetrix who are really experienced in the IT world.' (ICT, union representative)

After having described the presence of resources and social actors aims, next paragraphs will describe how particular combinations of resources and aims result in different kinds of institutional entrepreneurship of co-evolution.

6.3.2 Discussion and cross-comparative analysis: Kinds of institutional entrepreneurship or co-evolution

Based on a cross-comparative analysis of the case studies, institutional entrepreneurship or co-evolution for employment policies at sub-national levels seem to occur when resources at multiple sub-national levels enable social actors to shape employment policies. These resources need to be contextualised within the specific historical development of these levels as this factor explains the role of social actors and the available resources (table 11).

Based on the description of the cases, Waste and the first business division of Food are in the situation of co-evolution and institutional entrepreneurship. Specifically, in all the subsidiaries of Waste complementarity between regional governments and the joint committee with regard to training and between the joint committee and subsidiary level for pay has been observed. For the former, local management of Waste tried to shape training policies in order to guarantee the main activity. However

this result via an unexpected channel. Based on the Belgian context, it was expected that subsidiaries' social actors would use the advisory board of regional agencies but this was not the case. Rather, informal personal contact with cabinets was established over time, enabling the employers' federations to shape the content and organisation of obligatory vocational training. For pay policies complementarity was found between the joint committee level and the subsidiary level. Specifically, Waste reshaped pay policies by collective agreement together with three other MNCs (which together owned 40 percent of the market); job classifications were adapted in order to pay some employees less. As such more space was left for differentiation in pay policies and practices at the subsidiary or site level. On the site level, management maintained informal agreements with trade unions that originated from the former SMEs. Thereby it limited the occurrence of work interruptions. Moreover, co-evolution was even slightly more pronounced in the Walloon case. Specifically, green waste treatment as a forward-thinking employment policy was achieved through complementarity between the web of inter-firm relations and regional governments.

For Food similar observations were made for the first business division. The aims of its employment policy were threefold: cost optimisation in the packaging division, employee cross-training in multiple skills and attracting employees. Therefore local management shaped policies at the level of regional government and the joint committee. More precisely, as part of the advisory board of regional agencies, the training fund and the social fund, local management co-determined employment policies in those settings. As a result, simulation companies, a training centre and a pension scheme in line with the subsidiaries' employment aims were set up. At the same time, it left room for additional measures, such as contributing to social funds even after employees left the subsidiary. So co-evolution for the first business division resulted from complementarity between the three sub-national levels and actors' roles within these levels. For the other divisions this was not so much the case as the historical context and the main activity differed significantly. However, at the time of data collection, the municipality aims to fund a R&D centre with facilities for high-skills employees to help in attracting, recruiting and training them. As the HR manager of the second business division is also involved in the centre's start-up, though quite limited initially because of the competitive position (R&D), future policies within local clusters are expected to be shaped by the second business division.

However, there are differences between the cases of Food and Waste. In the case of Food, there is a long-term orientation as illustrated by the presence of Belgian headquarters for the Belgian operations. In the case of Waste, a short-term focus on profit has been observed as some of the subsidiaries have been taken over or sold again. The latter fit with the findings of Kristensen and Morgan (2007). They state that even if the headquarters has a short-term focus, subsidiaries can think about the long-term by engaging in sub-national initiatives, as the Walloon subsidiary did. In this respect it could be argued that the case of Waste is more an example of adaptation to the institutional logic. However, Cantwell

et al. (2010) while discussing co-evolution, recognise that there is a difference in degree but not in kind.

Quite the opposite situation, no institutional entrepreneurship at all, was observed for ICT and the Walloon subsidiary of Packaging. The strategic aims of Packaging Wallonia were to test new practices within the pilot company. As such shaping employment policies at sub-national levels would not have contributed as alternative employment policies were internally developed. In the case of ICT there were indeed training centres on the sector level but they were organised for all white-collar workers across sectors. In addition as the courses were too general, they were not in accordance with the training aims of ICT. Similar observations were made for the issue of pay.

For the packaging in Flanders institutional entrepreneurship between employment policies at sub-national levels and actors is rather limited. Indeed, in the case of Packaging Flanders, an agreement between SMEs and MNCs was made at the sector level regarding pay. In addition, fringe benefits were then negotiated differently at individual sites of the same subsidiary. Through this management could differentiate between the sites in order to maintain its good relations with trade unions and guarantee production. However, this was not yet the case for training as no training centre at the sector level was installed. Therefore the case of Packaging Flanders is best described as limited institutional entrepreneurship (table 11).

Table 11 Co-evolution and institutional entrepreneurship

Aims of Employment policy	Social actors	Waste Wallonia	Waste Flanders/ Brussels	Food Business division 1	Food Business division 2	Packaging Flanders	Packaging Wallonia	ICT
		<p>Management</p> <p>Skills and competences to execute the main activity</p> <p>Recruit, reward and train employees to work with green waste techniques</p> <p>Limit the number of strikes</p>	<p>Skills and competences to execute the main activity</p> <p>Recruit, reward and train employees to work with green waste techniques</p> <p>Limit the number of strikes</p>	<p>Cost optimization in the packaging section of Food</p> <p>Multiple skill development</p> <p>Attract and reward employees</p> <p>Job security</p>	<p>R&D training</p>	<p>Multiple skill development</p> <p>Attract and recruit the best workers</p> <p>Limit number of strikes</p> <p>Keep fringes benefits which were collectively agreed upon</p>	<p>Pilot company, employment tools are tested</p> <p>Attractive remuneration package</p> <p>Job specific training</p>	<p>Attract high skilled employees</p> <p>Reward them above market</p>

	Social actors	Waste Wallonia	Waste Flanders/ Brussels	Food Business division 1	Food Business division 2	Packaging Flanders	Packaging Wallonia	ICT
Complementarity		<p>Between regional government and joint committee level: training</p> <p>Between joint committee and company level : remuneration</p> <p>Between regional government and web of inter-firm relations: training and recruitment</p>	<p>Between regional government and joint committee level: training</p> <p>Between joint committee and company level : remuneration</p>	<p>Between regional government and joint committee level: training</p> <p>Between joint committee and company level: remuneration</p>	No complementarity	Between joint committee and company level: remuneration	No complementarity	No complementarity
Sub-national resources		<p>Informal relations with cabinets</p> <p>Collective bargaining</p> <p>Relation between former owners and employees</p> <p>Coalition of Regional governments</p>	<p>Informal relations with cabinets</p> <p>Collective bargaining</p> <p>Relation between former owners and employees</p>	<p>Advisory board of regional development agencies</p> <p>Board of pension fund</p> <p>Board of training centres</p>	No resources	Collective bargaining at the company level and joint committee level	No resources	No resources

	Social actors	Waste Wallonia	Waste Flanders/ Brussels	Food Business division 1	Food Business division 2	Packaging Flanders	Packaging Wallonia	ICT
Specific historical context		<p>Regionalisation of vocational training policies during five state reforms</p> <p>Subsidiaries are former SME directed by former owners</p> <p>Strong link with surrounding companies and municipalities (contract with municipalities originate from former SMEs)</p>	<p>Regionalisation of vocational training policies during five state reforms</p> <p>Subsidiary are former SME directed by former owners</p> <p>Strong link with surrounding companies and municipalities (contract with municipalities originate from former SMEs)</p>	<p>Existence since 200 years</p> <p>Strong family culture</p> <p>Strong established relations with suppliers and clients</p>	<p>Business divisions have only been installed since 2007 and originate from the first business division</p>	<p>Former SME's taken over by the same company</p> <p>History of social conflict and high number of unionization</p>	<p>Is a pilot company of packaging international since 1960</p>	<p>ICT has an international character since 2009 Former SME were established as from the mid nineties</p>
Relation between social actors and sub-national levels		Co-evolution	Institutional entreprenurship	Co-evolution	No institutional entreprenurship	Limited institutional entreprenurship	No institutional entreprenurship	No institutional entreprenurship

6.4 Conclusion

The chapter observed subsidiaries' social actors to shape employment policies at sub-national levels if resources at sub-national levels are available for social actors to engage in these levels. In this case, social actors could set up employment policies at sub-national levels in line with their aims. High levels of institutional entrepreneurship or co-evolution took place if resources were available at multiple complementary sub-national levels at the same time. The latter were however dependent on the specific historical evolution of the sub-national levels.

Three additional remarks can be made regarding the results found. First of all unexpected resources were also used to shape employment policies at sub-national levels. Indeed on the level of the regional government, trust relations were set up between the employers' federation and politicians that remained over time. In this way employers' interest could be put forward when discussing vocational training policies within regional governments. Another informal resource could be observed on the subsidiary level as a consequence of the way companies have evolved over time. Specifically the way former site directors negotiated employment policies in an informal way resulted in resources for these site directors to remain in the position of how to handle trade unions. Second, the chapter shows that social actors within MNCs in Belgium have a wide range of resources, even beyond the formal institutions. However this chapter has observed far more entrepreneurship from management than from trade unions. This can be explained by the pillarisation of trade unions in Belgium. Indeed, in Belgium, there are a Christian, socialist and liberal trade unions each with their own employment aims. Trade unions could benefit more from these resources if trade unions would work together to set up a common employment policy. As many boards and committees are based on parity, trade unions representatives can then use these resources at sub-national levels to shape employment policies supporting their employment aims. Third, there is quite some differences in the presence of resources to shape training versus pay policies. Specifically, for training all employment policies at sub-national levels as identified in the literature and the case of Belgium are used. For pay policies on the contrary only the sector and the subsidiary level offer resources to shape these policies.

Based on the findings of this section, it can be concluded that there are formal as well as informal resources to set up employment policies at sub-national levels. By investigating the influence of multiple resources, the findings make clear that compensating or reinforcing policy levels are important to take into consideration. In this way, the findings of this chapter contribute to previous studies integrating only the national or one sub-national level. Moreover these employment policies at sub-national levels are found to be shaped. Many empirical studies have indeed used the business system approach or the resource-based view (Whitley, 2000) to explain the way different employment policies are set up within MNCs (Almond et al., 2005; Edwards et al., 2013). Scholars using these

approaches generally focus on the national level only; limited attention has been devoted to employment policies at sub-national levels and the social actors involved at these levels (Amable & Palombarini, 2009; Dunning & Lundan, 2010; Morgan, 2009). These shortcomings have been addressed in part by institutional scholars who have focussed on within country variations and how they are constituted by social actors. Empirically, Crouch et al. (2009) studied how local coordination forms were shaped by MNCs based on international competition and companies' interests. Pulignano (2006) emphasised the role of trade unions, noting they have made use of subsidiaries' performance to play a role in constructing employment policies. Similarly regional economic studies have shown MNCs to be influencing employment policies within former industrial districts (Beccatini, 2002). As leading firms, MNCs enter these districts by merger or take-over and link indigenous companies with the international market (Whitford, 2001). Through this activity, they shape information on employment, internal labour markets and the presence of supporting institutions like universities, vocational training centres and trade and professional organisations (Molina-Morales & Martinez-Fernandez, 2004, 2008). Still missing amidst this research, however, was information on how employment policies at multiple sub-national levels are shaped by subsidiaries' social actors within MNCs. This chapter filled this gap by investigating under which conditions employment policies at each of several levels namely in the regional government, at the inter-firm level and at the company level are shaped by social actors within MNCs in Belgium. In doing so, this chapter added to studies on within country variation and regional studies focusing on the emergence of alternative employment policies by integrating multiple levels. More generally, issues of space and location are considered in a more fully elaborated way than do studies that examine the national level only. This more nuanced examination fits with the idea that growing attention should be devoted to the sub-national relations of MNCs' subsidiaries (Dellestrand & Kappen, 2012). In addition, rather than considering employment policies at sub-national levels as constraints to social actors, social actors as institutional entrepreneurs contribute to employment policies at sub-national levels. The findings confirm hereby the statement of Ferner et al. (2012) which describes MNCs social actors as setting the standards for institution building. Similarly, Crouch et al. (2009) positioned social actors at sub-national levels as rule makers and social actors at the national level operating as rule takers.

Based on this interaction between policies at sub-national levels and social actors, these policies are expected in turn to influence the transfer of pay and training policies and practices. Specifically, vocational training centre at the regional and sector level will affect the transfer within MNCs' subsidiaries as subsidiaries have access to benefit from these initiatives. Furthermore, sector specific job classification will allow room on the subsidiary level to transfer pay and training policies and practices. In addition, employment policies that have been put in place as a results of the specific historic evolution of the subsidiary are expected to inhibit transfer as local directors are trusted regarding the daily operations of the subsidiary. However the transfer is not expected to be observed if

multiple employment policies at sub-national levels are only present. Rather based on the limited pieces of literature on the employment policies at sub-national levels and transfer (Bélanger et al., 2013), it is expected that these policies will only be influential for transfer if they are contributing to MNCs' employment aims for the subsidiary under consideration. This is not necessarily the case as employment policies at sub-national levels as shaped by subsidiaries' social actors are not always in line with headquarters' aims. This can occur because of two reasons. First of all, part of the resources are available because of the system of industrial relations or are based on parity. This means that the obtained policies also reflect trade unions' interest. In addition, conflictual interests have been observed between subsidiaries and MNCs headquarters (Edwards et al., 2007a). Following two chapters will therefore investigate how policies at sub-national levels affect the transfer.

Chapter VII: How do employment policies at multiple sub-national levels affect headquarters' control, centralisation and subsidiaries' discretion in MNCs?

This chapter is based on:

Dekocker, V. (2013). Variation within the host country: How does the sub-national level affect the transfer of training policies in MNCs' subsidiaries in Belgium? Paper accepted for ILERA. Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Dekocker, V. (in press). Variation within the host country: How do complementary sub-national levels affect subsidiary discretion on vocational training policies within multinationals? *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 57 (2). doi: 10.1177/0022185614564376 (IF=0.649)

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has shown the relevance of regional, inter-firm and firm specific employment policies for MNCs. Specifically it has shown that resources at multiple reinforcing or compensating employment policies affect the level of entrepreneurship or co-evolution. It is the aim of the two coming chapters to investigate how these employment policies at sub-national levels mediate the transfer. Two aspects of the transfer, following previous empirical studies will be distinguished, subsidiaries' discretion, centralisation and headquarters' control¹² and the headquarters-subsidary configuration. As our study fits with the focus on diverging policies, these chapters will respectively use the business system approach and resource-based view as a theoretical point of departure. The present chapter will focus on the former.

Specifically, the current chapter will focus on how employment policies at multiple reinforcing or compensating levels within the host country affect the extent of discretion and headquarters' control. After all, policies at complementary levels can shape strategic choices such as discretion, as these policies can enhance headquarters to achieve their goals (Deeg, 2009). This chapter, therefore, aims to investigate how complementarity between employment policies at the regional government, the sector, the web of inter-firm relations, the subsidiary level and the national level influences subsidiaries' discretion and headquarters' control in MNCs' subsidiaries in Belgium. To investigate this, the remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. In the next paragraphs the chapter will briefly describe the theoretical framework used. Thereafter the chapter distinguishes between the importance of vocational training and pay policies for MNCs. Furthermore, it described the way employment policies at sub-national levels are assumed to influence headquarters' control and subsidiaries' discretion. This is followed by a case study analysis. This section will discuss the different levels that influence the extent of discretion and headquarters' control. In addition, this section will present employment policies at these sub-national levels as complementary for MNCs.

7.2 Employment policies at complementary sub-national levels and headquarters' control, centralisation and discretion

Empirical studies on employment policies and practices frequently use the national business system approach to explain subsidiaries' discretion (Whitley, 2000: 33). These studies fall between two conceptual paths: the parent or home-country-centred approach (country-of-origin effect) and the host-country-centred approach. These approaches respectively refer to the socio-economic characteristics

¹² In the remainder, centralisation and discretion will be used interchangeable as the concepts are opposite interpretations of the span of control

of the country in which the headquarters is located and the countries in which subsidiaries are operational. It is expected that the host context mediates the country-of-origin effect because external management styles differ or other industrial relations systems are installed (Ferner & Quintanilla, 2002; Pulignano, 2006). However, the extent of the host country effect has been found to depend on the nature of the employment practice studied (Storey, 1989). Contrary to other employment practices, training policies are expected to increasingly be subjected to the development and control systems of the host country (Almond, 2011; Heidenreich, 2012). For example, studies have found subsidiary's discretion regarding vocational training policies, as the subsidiary should conform to the national employment system. Conversely, global management strive to minimise the pay instruments negotiated locally because of host countries' collective bargaining systems (Almond et al., 2005; Pulignano, 2006). Accordingly, contrary to pay, for training more discretion and less headquarters control is expected to be observed.

Furthermore, studies indicate that the host country should not be considered as internally homogenous (Bélanger et al., 2013; Morgan, 2007). Specifically, employment policies are likely to vary in accordance with local and regional labour markets, as well as between sectors with different workforce compositions (Almond, 2011; Crouch et al., 2009). Case study research on MNCs indicates the prevalence of sub-national institutions (the Chamber of Commerce and Industry) and particular sub-national labour markets to be explanatory for headquarters' control and subsidiary's discretion (Almond et al., 2005; Muller, 1998). Also Whitley's original assumption stated that different levels exist, such as the inter-firm level or the level of regional government (Almond, 2011; Morgan, 2007; Whitley, 2000). Based here on studies on the transfer would benefit from integrating employment policies at sub-national levels.

To integrate policies at sub-national levels into the study on headquarters' control and subsidiaries' discretion, the idea of subsidiaries' social actors as institutional entrepreneurs with the business system approach is combined. In this way, it will enable to investigate how employment policies at multiple sub-national levels shaped by subsidiaries' social actors, enable MNCs to attract the necessary skills and train employees. Based on the policies' contribution to MNCs' aims, it is expected to affect subsidiaries' discretion as headquarters may benefit from these initiatives. So these different employment policies at sub-national levels are hereby expected to be complementary. First, complementarity between employment policies levels can only be observed if it contributes to social actors' competitive advantage. As such it influences the strategic choices of MNCs' headquarters like discretion and control. If this is not the case, actors will not express their desire to keep complementary institutions (Deeg, 2009). Put it differently, if these employment policies at sub-national levels do not contribute to MNCs' competitive advantage, it is unlikely that they will influence headquarters' control and subsidiaries' discretion. Second complementarity refers to the co-

existence of employment policies at more than one level to enhance and maintain one another. This occurs, first of all, through a reinforcing or compensating effect for each other or the national level. In addition, this means that both levels are compatible or that one level is supplementary and makes up for the deficiencies of the other (Deeg, 2009; Lane & Wood, 2009).

So in this chapter complementarity as in the previous chapter refers to the reinforcing and compensating character of employment policies at different sub-national levels. In addition it refers to complementarity with headquarters' employment aims for the subsidiary under study and not with subsidiaries' social actors aims like in the previous chapter. However, headquarters' aims are hereby not considered as equal to subsidiaries' social actors' aims. Specifically, as previously stated (chapter VI), employment policies at sub-national levels were first of all aligned with subsidiaries' social actors. The latter are not necessary in accordance with headquarters' aims because some resources are based on parity reflecting trade unions' interest and conflict between local managers and headquarters' interests have been observed (Pulignano, 2006). So the present chapter will investigate how employment policies at sub-national levels affect the discretion and headquarters' control on pay and training policies and practices. The following paragraphs will therefore define sub-national policies, as well as discuss how these can contribute to MNCs' employment aims for a particular subsidiary. This section will also discuss how this affects discretion and headquarters' control.

7.2.1 How can employment policies at sub-national levels enable MNCs to achieve their objectives?

MNCs all emphasise the need for a skilled workforce as being highly strategic nowadays given the economic context in which they operate (Noe, 2003). Indeed, within the coming years, many OECD countries will be confronted with a shortage of skilled workers as a result of baby boomers leaving the labour market and an inadequate number of employees entering the market. As a consequence, vacancies will remain and a war for talent, particularly with regards to key positions, is expected to take place. In this context, vocational training will become increasingly important as a means of adjusting and adapting employees' skills to meet changing demands and remain competitive (Cappelli, 2012; Colbert, 2004). Similarly, attractive packages as well as elaborated job classification to integrate more senior workers will be present in companies (Cappelli, 2012; Noe, 2003).

To meet this demand, complementarity between employment policies at national and employment policies at sub-national levels can support MNCs. Specifically these policies can contribute to MNCs as they enable MNCs to meet their aims. Consequently, they affect strategic choices such as discretion, centralisation and headquarters' control to benefit from these policies. Management

literature has indeed pointed to the emergence of ‘multi-centred’ firms besides the vertically integrated MNC. In the former, discretion is no longer centralised but widely disseminated and strategic responsibilities need to be coordinated (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989; Malnight, 2001). As a result, a wide variety of intermediate structures and modes of organising these policies at the international level has been observed (Rugman et al., 2011). Specifically, together with the vertically integrated firm, policies developed at headquarters were assumed to be universally competitive. However, the prevalence of the multi-centred MNCs, characterised by their key subsidiaries located in different regions, clusters and sectors, raise the expectation that competitive policies are also found at the sub-national level (Hervas-Oliver & Albors-Garrigos, 2007; Molina-Morales & Martinez-Fernandez, 2008). As a consequence, employment policies at complementary sub-national levels potentially enable MNCs in the first instance, to train and recruit employees in line with their objectives due to sector specific skills and competences and sub-national training centres or competitive pay packages (Colbert, 2004; Hervas-Oliver & Albors-Garrigos, 2007). Second, making use of these provisions can affect strategic decisions such as discretion because national subsidiaries have the knowledge of and access to sub-national initiatives (Bélanger et al., 2013).

7.2.2 How can employment policies at complementary sub-national levels affect discretion and headquarters’ control in MNCs’ subsidiaries in Belgium?

Based on the previous chapter, three possible employment policies at sub-national levels for training and two for pay have been distinguished. These policies are expected to affect headquarters’ control and discretion particularly when there exists complementarity between these sub-national levels. Following paragraphs will discuss each of these (complementary) levels. Complementarity as previously defined, refer to two aspects: employment policies at reinforcing or compensating sub-national levels and the contribution to social actors’ aims.

Regional government. The first notion of complementarity represents the national, regional, the sector and the subsidiary level where the latter three supplements the former. More specifically, during the institutional reform of the state, vocational training as a tool of the employment policy was delegated to the regions (Swenden et al., 2006). Regions and their regional government agencies fund the employment and training bodies (public as well as private). In addition they provide incentives to promote vocational training of certain target groups and training cheques for companies. Moreover, sectors can rely on the agencies to develop sector vocational training. The main difference between the regional governments relates to the level of the training cheques as well as the scope of the training policies. Unlike other regions, Flanders gained an additional initiative. That is, some sectors in Flanders have a ‘convenant’. This is a specific agreement between a particular sector and the Flemish

government, specifying the employability and training initiatives for a particular sector. As the supplementary effect is higher in Flanders, Flemish subsidiaries are expected to have greater discretion than those in other regions. This will only be the case if these policies are considered as competitive by the headquarters.

Inter-firm level-collective bargaining. The inter-firm level creates complementarity between sub-national systems in two ways: 1) compatibility between the national level, the sector level and the subsidiary level within the domain of collective bargaining; 2) reinforcement between two different policies to establish a web of inter-firm relations. The former is applicable for pay and training policies whereas the latter is only applicable for training policies. Specifically, within the system of collective bargaining, social partners initially develop a framework for vocational training for all employees at the national level. For pay, a maximum increase in pay is bi-annually negotiated. These national negotiations result in guidelines in terms of the financial contribution from the employers to the sector training fund as well as the training participation rate. In each sector, these guidelines are aligned with sector-specific needs. It is important to note that the guidelines are formulated as objectives rather than obligations. If no sector agreement exists, the national agreement is applied. This encourages companies to make use of vocational training initiatives without being concerned about clearing thresholds or punishment when the agreement is not followed. Other differences between sectors can be traced back to two aspects: the prevalence of training centres and the distinction between white-collar and blue-collar workers regarding vocational training. Regarding the former, not every sector has a training centre that is financed by collective means, as a way of better aligning the provision of training with training needs. In addition, in contrast to blue-collar workers, sector vocational training for white-collar workers is predominately organised across sectors; training for white-collar workers is only foreseen in some sectors. Therefore, higher discretion is expected when sector specific vocational training is organised for both blue-collar and white-collar workers. In addition, similar to the level of the regional government, these vocational training policies should be considered as influential for the transfer of pay and training policies and practices if it affects MNCs' competitive position.

For pay, on the contrary, what has been agreed in collective agreements on the sector level is obligatory. Specifically, minimum income and job classifications need to be followed, however subsidiaries can add to it or deviate from it, though only in a positive way. Furthermore, differences between sectors not only refer to pay levels and job classification, but also to the presence of a social or pension fund. In case of a sector agreement on contributions to a pension or social fund, all employers are obliged to contribute. Accordingly, discretion and headquarters' control are expected to diverge between subsidiaries belonging to different sectors. So employment policies at complementary sub-national levels are expected to mediate the transfer for pay and training policies. As more potential

complementary between sub-national levels is present for training, it is expected to have a higher influence on the transfer than for pay. This is furthermore reinforced by the difference in nature between pay and training. Specifically, as previously stated, pay is more strategic and easier to measure and therefore much more controlled from the headquarters (Storey, 1989).

Inter-firm level-two different policy levels. A final notion of complementarity results from clustering around economically interesting locations like the port of Ghent and Antwerp, or around former raw materials such as in Liege and Mons. This web of inter-firm relations does not necessarily comprise companies executing the same business activities. Quite often these webs are comprised of one central company (generally MNCs) surrounded by suppliers (generally former SMEs) (Zeitlin, 2004). Vocational training within these groups of companies is funded by two regionalised policies: industrial policy and vocational training. Regional governments and their agencies operate as supportive institutions, tasked with encouraging cooperation between different companies along the value chain. This can result in the development of innovative employment measures in order to solve the shortage of skilled employees needed for a particular web-of inter firm relations. More specifically, a funded collaboration can be formed with the surrounding universities, resulting in specialised training programs or the establishment of a new educational department (Molina-Morales & Martinez-Fernandez, 2008). As such, there is a human resources specialisation in line with companies' needs. Moreover a division of labour in line with the value chain within the local environment is created, which remains a specific competitive advantage for cluster companies (Hervas-Oliver & Albors-Garrigos, 2007). Therefore subsidiaries belonging to a web of inter-firm relations are expected to report higher discretion on policies because collective services are only set up based on companies' needs.

Besides these three complementarities, subsidiaries' policies can affect the transfer of pay and training policies in MNCs' subsidiaries. Packaging and Waste showed that former negotiated policies between trade unions and site management could encourage management to keep site specific benefits. Furthermore also informal policies between employees and site directors that had evolved over time, resulted in site specific benefits. To investigate the expectations as raised above, the following section will discuss the findings. Specifically it will first of all describe the levels of discretion and control in MNCs' subsidiaries. Thereafter it will examine the presence of employment policies at complementary sub-national levels. It will end by combining both illustrating how complementarity enhances subsidiaries' discretion and inhibits headquarters' control.

7.3 Employment policies at complementary sub-national levels, discretion and headquarters' control

Previous analyses showed a higher level of discretion for subsidiaries being part of particular sectors and federations (Bélanger et al., 2013). However, within this chapter it is expected that sub-national policies affect discretion and headquarters' control if they are complementary. Put it differently if reinforcing or compensating levels enhance MNCs' competitive advantage, these policies will affect headquarters' control and discretion (Almond, 2011; Meyer et al., 2011). Hence in Belgium, if discretion and less headquarters control and centralisation is observed, findings will be addressed to regional governments, membership in sectors and web of inter-firm relations or subsidiary former policies. In this section, the chapter first of all sketches the training and pay policies of MNCs' subsidiaries in Belgium. Thereafter, configurations of policies at sub-national levels and subsidiary discretion and headquarters' control within the theoretical framework presented above, are discussed.

7.3.1 Subsidiaries' discretion, centralisation and headquarters' control

Waste: high level of discretion and limited control. Empirical evidence shows the tight control exerted by Anglo-Saxon companies over foreign subsidiaries (Fenton- O'Greevy et al., 2007). Although the study only studied one UK based MNC, a centralised approach regarding vocational training and pay policies was not found. In the case of Waste, the employment policies at sub-national levels mediated first of all the transfer of training policies as the MNC did not solely identify vocational training needs. More specifically, as Wastes' main activity is waste cleaning and treatment, regional governments prescribed the needed vocational training in light of the regionalisation of environmental issues during state reform. Consequently, every blue-collar worker working in this sector was obliged to undertake 35 hours of training. As such, the budget and content of vocational training was legally determined. In reality, the vocational training was foreseen at the sector level and the regional government like in many other European countries (Cognard, 2011). This resulted in subsidiaries' discretion regarding vocational training as local knowledge was required in order to subscribe the workers to these sessions and guarantee the Belgian operations. No differences were hereby found between subsidiaries belonging to different regions.

For the limited number of white-collar workers in all subsidiaries, former directors determined the training budget. Although the Belgian HR manager (in the absence of a global HR manager) undertook several attempts to centralise the vocational training policies, he was unsuccessful. In Waste, all the subsidiaries were former SMEs still directed by the former owner. As a consequence, former owners were still responsible for the majority of the management tasks although central functions like finance,

HR management or administration were being established. This situation is perhaps best summarised as follows:

'You also have a budget for training depending on the results, we are only decision maker... ok we are a multinational company and a large group but actually the sites can act quite autonomously and we still have a SME structure. For training for white-collar workers, done on the job or negotiated with the local director.' (Site Director, Waste)

Evidently, former owners understand the way the business operates and the importance of training policies to attract the right employees in order to remain competitive. As there were only four major players, Belgian management relied on local managers. One way to gain discretion is indeed to use one's knowledge about the importance of long-term relationships with clients and the market situation in which MNCs are operational (Ferner et al., 2012).

This high level of discretion for the Walloon subsidiary was further reinforced by membership in a web of inter-firm relations. Specifically, Wastes' focus on green waste treatment to remain competitive was in line with the green party in the Walloon government (not represented in other regional governments). As such, collaboration was funded between universities, MNCs and SMEs. Within this cluster, a training and education centre for blue-collar and white-collar workers was established in order to (re)train employees to work with new methods. As a consequence, the role of Belgian HR management was limited to setting up a centralised vocational training policy as the local initiatives were in line with the MNCs' needs. After all, when training is supported by the local contexts and aligned locally with the skill requirements, MNCs can better benefit from discretion (Benneworth & Hoppers, 2006; Coulson & Ferrario, 2007).

For pay policies, no formal policies have been in place. Specifically, for basic pay, the collective agreement was followed. This was competitive in the sense that as previously mentioned less risky jobs were added to pay lower basic income. As a result Waste needed to pay only what has been agreed on the sector level. At the same time it left room for site or subsidiary specific benefits. This is particularly important when taken into account MNCs' competitive advantage. As mentioned earlier, these benefits maintained the good relations between employees and local management. Consequently, less work interruptions occurred and the position of Waste was less affected. Accordingly, the prolongation of contracts was not threatened based on work interruptions. Put it differently, MNCs' headquarters benefitted from limited control. In this way the limited management structure, although initially in place because of acquired SMEs as described earlier, preserved to exist. Furthermore Waste showed that a tax-efficient initiative for variable pay contributed to subsidiaries' discretion. Specifically, this national tax-efficient initiative could be integrated into sector collective agreements

and concrete criteria could be negotiated at the subsidiary level. In one subsidiary of Waste for example, the number of truck accidents and violation of safety rules were inserted as criteria to determine variable pay. These specific criteria were decided on the subsidiary or site level because it was cost effective. For example decrease in number of accidents as a criteria, was not relevant for all sites. In addition, no agreement could be obtained between representatives of different joint committees as previously mentioned. As such subsidiaries gained discretion regarding variable pay and less headquarters' control was installed.

ICT: no discretion and centralised control. Quite the opposite level of discretion is found in ICT and Packaging. ICT is a fast growing company with different sites across Belgium. As all employees are white-collar workers and no specific sector training for ICT has been developed, white-collar workers have access to the available cross-sector vocational training. Contrary to the case of Waste, ICT has a centralised vocational training policy, developed at the global level, for all its subsidiaries.

The budget and training content for all employees are decided centrally and are aligned with the MNCs' strategy. This does not mean that ICT does not make use of external vocational training. Rather, as the union representative explains, external companies foresee specific training sessions because collective services are unable to meet the competences requested by the clients:

'The sector training programs are mainly used for the support functions, ICT needs specific sessions offered by IBM, Cetrix, companies really experienced in the IT world.' (ICT, Union representative)

Similar for pay packages, ICT has its own classification developed at the headquarters. Moreover thresholds proposed by the sector are only used as a point of departure. The limited integration of the classification is explained by its limited up to date character. As ICT employs mainly high profiles, job classification of the sector does not allow to recruit the diversified profiles as needed by ICT. Accordingly when only using this sector classification, the needed competence to fulfil consultancy in the five divisions would be missing. As a consequence, the competitive position of ICT, like for training policies, would be affected:

'ICT makes use of the HAY model for its job classification, it is developed internally in collaboration with HAY. It composes of 60 described jobs with different pay levels. We are not involved, the method is reported to us but we don't know which pay level is addressed to different jobs and levels within one job.' (ICT, Union representative)

Packaging: no discretion and control on supra-national and worldwide level. Similar to ICT, Packaging is controlled by higher organisational levels. The training budget, the content of the training

and proposed skills based on an employability matrix were put forward by the European offices and global headquarters. Flexibility was only allowed if non-compliance with overall policy could be justified based on the financial criteria. This centralised policy was set-up for both blue-collar and white-collar workers in both subsidiaries.

However for the Flemish subsidiary, due to major restructuring, no budget for vocational training was foreseen by European offices or global headquarters. As the emphasis on higher skills levels remained, a standardised mentorship program for all subsidiaries in this division was introduced to meet the training requests. Employees with seniority taught younger employees to work with different machines:

'That's just someone from the subsidiary who has ever been worked as machine controller. Mainly older workers sitting together for four to eight weeks and older workers then decide yes he's ready to just run with that machine.' (Packaging, Union representative)

This focus on centralisation was not mediated by the sector level due to limited collective means. As the means, as put forward by the national level, are to be considered as guidelines, sector federations cannot impose a budget. For pay, all subsidiaries followed the sector agreed level of the big SME. This did however not result in more subsidiaries' discretion. Rather the collective agreement was integrated in the global classification and grading of each business division. For variable pay and fringe benefits, deviation was only possible if it contributes to MNCs' competitive advantage. This competitive advantage refers particularly to tax beneficial instruments (e.g. collective agreement 90)

Food: medium level of discretion and headquarters' control. Contrary to the Packaging sector, companies in the food sector agreed to finance the sector level in a more elaborate way than was requested at the national level. In addition, the food sector was financed by regional development agencies to set-up sector specific initiatives for blue-collar and white-collar workers, such as a simulation company. However, the prevalence of these services does not affect subsidiaries' discretion and headquarters' control in the same way because of the nature of the business divisions in Food. Two business divisions¹³ were represented within the Flemish and Walloon subsidiaries. These business divisions employed different types of employees; the first and second division employed blue-collar and white-collar workers, respectively. Also their strategy differed; the first business division was very locally orientated and suppliers and clients needed to be close by, whereas the

¹³ As previously described, the first business division also manages the third and fourth business division (in the remainder referred to as the first division). For the first division, the number of white-collar workers is rather small.

second business division was internationally driven and focused on R&D. As such competitive advantages differed between the division.

In general, the budget for vocational training for both divisions was nationally centralised and the Belgian subsidiaries offered shared services regarding training. However, discretion on external vocational training policies is higher for the first business division than for the second division. For the second division, shared services offered to engineers vocational training and the content was determined by the headquarters. This meant that despite the availability of similar collective services, the training services were less commonly used as they did not completely meet the training needs. Accordingly, the first business division gained additional discretion on account of the competitive collective services. This discretion was further enhanced, as an aspect of the vocational training (the simulation company) was being reverse transferred to other subsidiaries because of its contribution to the divisions' performance (Edwards et al., 2012):

'It is centralised yes but we have something to say as well, for all the things that have been developed, we contributed significantly.' (Food, HR manager, Division 1)

For pay, no impact on the transfer has been observed. Although the presence of the pension fund raised different expectations, it did not affect the transfer as minor contribution to MNCs' competitive position has been observed. So discretion on one part of the pay policy did not go along with an overall discretion on job classification.

Based on the description of the four case studies the need to integrate the policies at sub-national levels into the study of subsidiaries' discretion and headquarters' control is illustrated. However, not all levels are considered as beneficial by the MNCs, and these levels do not operate independently. In addition, there is a big difference between training and pay policies. The next paragraphs will link the results with the concept of complementarity. It will hereby focus on training policies as complementarity for pay policies have only been marginally observed. Furthermore within and cross-comparative analyses cannot be executed as limited variation is present.

7.3.2 Complementary sub-national levels

A cross-comparative analysis shows that in Belgium three complementary levels for vocational training exist. Central to the idea of complementarity is that at least two levels or domains have a reinforcing or compensating effect, and that the levels have a return to social actors (Deeg, 2009). In our research, this return for MNCs' headquarters relate to the way vocational training systems enable

MNCs to retrain employees or attract skills in line with their objectives for the subsidiary considered. Consequently, this will affect subsidiaries' discretion, centralisation and headquarters' control as national subsidiaries have the knowledge to benefit from these initiatives (Bélanger et al., 2013). The following paragraphs distinguish between complementarity between two sub-national levels and between policy domains; they also discuss the effect of complementarity on discretion and headquarters' control. Some quotes of the previous chapter will hereby reoccur where MNCs' aims and subsidiaries' aims match.

Complementary (sub)-national levels. The first notion of complementarity exists because vocational training facilities at the regional government level are only indirectly applied. Indeed in Waste, the sector training centres were held responsible for the obligatory training sessions. The regional government determined the content of the training sessions but the practical aspects of organising the training were delegated. Hence, the regional government and the sector understood vocational training for Waste in the following terms:

'Employees should follow this 35 hours of vocational training within five years. We are responsible for the organisation of the courses but governments should push companies to send their employees otherwise we will have a bottleneck in the last year.' (Waste, Director Employers' Federation)

This first interpretation also contributed to MNCs' competitive advantage as illustrated by the following comments by an employee of Waste. In this way the aims of MNCs' headquarters fit with social actors' aims.

'It's a very special industry and there are only few competitors, a very special work, they do not benefit from the employees staying home because of backaches so these training sessions are important. If they need to work with air masks to pump pollution, they have everything to gain from ensuring it has been applied correctly. They cannot afford to have a fatal accident. They need to have the PCA certificate for international customers. They really have no choice.' (Waste, Union representative)

Similarly, in Food, regional governments offered additional financial support to establish a simulation company for food packaging. However, as regional governments offered a packaging machine to use across sectors, the financial means should be considered as compensating in order to meet the special request of the sector (Deeg, 2009). The complementarity between the regional government and sector level is further illustrated, as none of the respondents pointed to the need for regional agencies to set-up a vocational training policy. Contrary to our expectations, the contribution of agencies is best illustrated as follows:

'I have been a HR manager for 11 years now I have never used these regional development agencies simply because they are not good enough. The quality is not great, not good enough.' (Food, HR manager)

Another notion of complementarity also reflects a compensating rather than reinforcing dimension between the national and sector level within the domain of collective bargaining. At the sector level, Food went also beyond what was nationally advised in terms of the budget and range of training initiatives to meet companies' needs, as the national guidelines were found to be limiting:

'...the increased contributions, employers as well as trade unions were really convinced about the need, it was thought through.' (Food, Chairman Training centre)

A final notion of complementarity encompasses two policy domains on the same sub-national level (regional level) as illustrated in the Walloon subsidiary of Waste (Deeg, 2009; Morgan, 2007). This subsidiary was financed to set-up a web of inter-firm relations working on green waste treatment. Due to the regionalisation of industrial policy and vocational training, the Walloon government of which the green party was a member, decided to invest in this skills centre with specific vocational training services. Findings reveal that membership of a web of inter-firm relations enables MNCs to access critical resources. In the case of Waste, the subsidiary was able to access the necessary skills to work with green waste technology.

No complementarity. However, not all MNCs considered vocational training policies at sub-national levels as complementary, particularly when one level was missing or collective services did not enable the MNC to meet its employment aims for the subsidiary under consideration. Specifically, Packaging is part of a sector in which training centres and agreements on training have only been set-up over the last year. Employers assume that vocational training at the sector level would not contribute to distinguish themselves from their main competitors:

'All companies are copies, same machines, same procedures, Collective training sessions, then employees meet employees from other companies and compare' (Packaging, Director Employers' Federation)

Similarly, ICT found the services of the sector were not in line with their main activity. As the vocational training foreseen by the sector targets white-collar workers across the various sectors, it does not fulfil their training needs. Therefore, ICT organised external training programs through private partners:

'We provide the practical organisation and we organise the training programs in-house but foreseen by external companies like IBM and Microsoft, and as the HR department, we assure that all employees get the same training and that emphasis on similar aspects, important for our clients, is guaranteed.' (ICT, HR manager)

The paragraphs above illustrated a wide range of reinforcing or compensating policies at sub-national levels. Not all of them were however considered as contributing to MNCs' aims. Therefore, different levels of headquarters' control and subsidiaries' discretion are expected. The following section investigates the link between employment policies at multiple sub-national levels and discretion and headquarters control.

7.3.3 Complementarity enhancing discretion

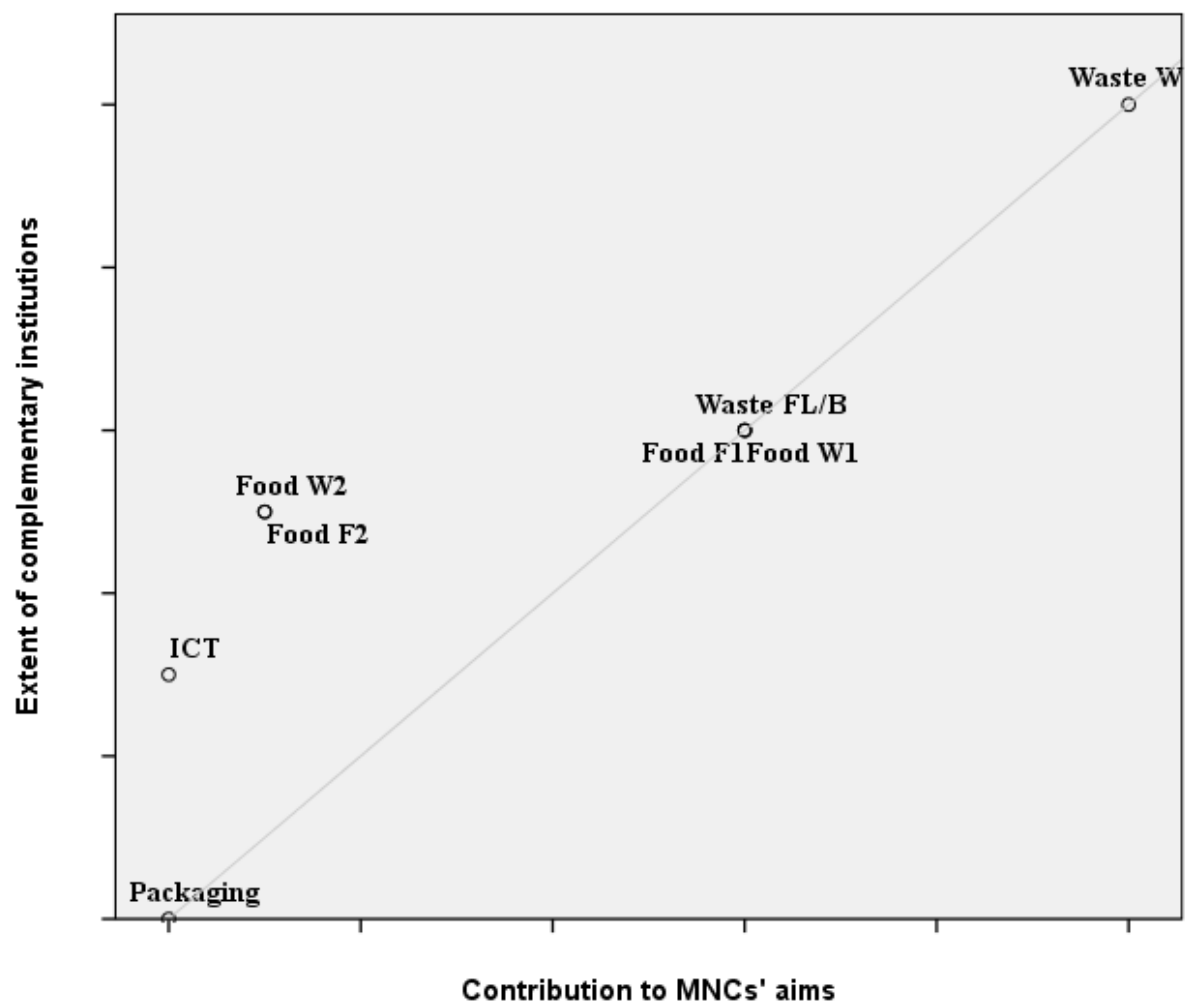
Following the idea of complementarity, the study expected vocational training at sub-national levels to potentially contribute to MNCs' competitive advantage and as such increase discretion. In order to use the vocational training policies at sub-national levels¹⁴, headquarters were indeed assumed to give subsidiaries discretion as they have the local knowledge (Bélanger et al., 2013). Specifically, subsidiaries in the Flemish region were assumed to have higher discretion because of the prevalence of the 'sector covenant' which is not present in the other two regions. Secondly, a higher level of discretion for subsidiaries operational in sectors with a training centre and sector specific training for white-collar workers was predicted. Finally, subsidiaries part of a web of inter-firm relations were expected to have higher discretion because of specific training provisions.

Cross-comparative analysis shows indeed that there is discretion on vocational training policies only when complementary levels or domains foresee vocational training as illustrated in figure 14. The highest level of discretion is observed for the cases of Waste as vocational training was foreseen at all three levels, and in line with their objectives. Long-term relations with clients enhanced discretion in all Waste subsidiaries. Although there was no general international training policy, the Belgian HR manager tried to centralise vocational training policies at the national level. However, this was unsuccessful due to obligatory training guaranteeing certificates to participants, and the web of inter-firm relations foreseeing specialised training needs (for example, green waste treatment at the Walloon subsidiary). As such a formal procedure controlled by the headquarters was not installed or developed as policies at sub-national levels needed to be followed.

¹⁴ As mentioned before, the remainder of the finding section will focus on vocational training policies as only Waste reported competitive policies. In this way, within and cross case study analysis could only be limited executed as variation is limited.

Medium level of discretion was observed for Food as collective services were not fully enabling the second division to retrain its employees in line with the divisions' aim. As the business division was more internationally orientated and focused on R&D, internal vocational training programs were established. Moreover, for the second business division, formal mechanisms like international training programs were controlled by the headquarters. On the contrary for the first business division, some aspects of the training policy like the simulation company were reverse diffused. Although reverse diffusion differs from discretion, particularly in the presence of German expats, it does not equal centralised control. Because of this, Food is described as medium levels of discretion. The lowest levels of discretion were observed in ICT and Packaging due to the non-existence of vocational services (Packaging) or the missing link between offered services and the competitive position (ICT).

Figure 14 Employment policies at complementary sub-national levels and discretion



Food F1: Flemish subsidiary first business division; Food W1: Walloon subsidiary first business division; Food F2: Flemish subsidiary second business division; Food W2: Walloon subsidiary second business division; Waste W: Walloon subsidiary Waste; Waste FL/B: Flemish and Brussels subsidiary of Waste

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the way employment policies at sub-national levels affect subsidiaries' discretion and headquarters' control in MNCs in Belgium. Overall, it demonstrates that discretion is only observed if policies at sub-national levels offer supportive initiatives for MNCs and if these initiatives are simultaneously present at more than one level. Accordingly, if employment policies are only present on the national level, regional government level, sector or web of inter-firm relations or subsidiary level, no discretion is observed. Similarly, if policies at sub-national levels do not fit with MNCs' aims, headquarters will limit subsidiaries' discretion. Consequently, Belgian subsidiaries have more space to develop their own policies when complementary regional regulation is foreseen or competitive initiatives are set-up, such as training centres at the sector level. Accordingly, subsidiaries' discretion increases as local knowledge is needed in order to benefit from competitive initiatives. Therefore, local managers, be it at the level of the regional government, the sector or the web of inter-firm relations, supported by surrounding policies and associations, are less dependent on the MNC (Bélanger et al., 2013).

However, two remarks need to be made based on the results found. First of all it can be questioned whether the effect of the employment policies at sub-national levels also applies to other employment practices and other types of training. After all, the nature of the employment practice is related to the extent of headquarters' control and subsidiaries' discretion. Pay and performance for example are easier to measure and more strategic and therefore, of more interest to be controlled by the headquarters (Storey, 1989). The second remark and following on the first remark, relates to the kind of resources on these levels. Specifically, for pay policies the resources offered on the sub-national levels were all based on parity contrary to resources for training. Consequently, there is a higher chance that pay policies are negotiated and are not in line with headquarters' aims as also trade unions' interest need to be taken into account. Indeed pay policies have been found to be less transferred from headquarters to subsidiaries. Only in the case of Waste, informal relations between site directors and trade unions and among MNCs on the sector level resulted in discretion. Based here on the presence of resources seem to be important besides the nature of the employment practice or policy to explain the extent of discretion and headquarters' control.

By integrating the employment policies at sub-national levels to study diverging pay and training policies and practices, the present chapter contributes to existing studies. First of all, it includes the increasing request for empirically investigating employment policies at multiple sub-national levels (Almond, 2011). Specifically, in the origin conceptualisation of the business system approach Whitley (2000) already conceptualised different relevant sub-national levels like the inter-firm and regional government though none of the empirical studies on the topic studied all these levels together. The

majority of survey and case study based research has indeed concentrated their analysis on the way the home effect is mediated by the host country effect without considering the possible moderating effects of within-country variation (Almond et al., 2005; Edwards et al., 2005). By focusing on these policies at sub-national levels as complementary, this chapter adds to the existing literature on headquarters' control, centralisation and subsidiaries' discretion in MNCs. Particularly it empirically contributes to the idea that the host country is no longer considered as internally homogenous (Morgan, 2007; Whitley, 2000). Specifically, this chapter showed that differences in subsidiaries' discretion, centralisation and headquarters' control are also associated with differences in policies at sub-national levels shaped by subsidiaries' social actors. Consequently the national level does not fully explain subsidiaries' discretion, centralisation and headquarters' control. However this chapter has investigated only one dimension of transfer. The next chapter will therefore focus on how employment policies at sub-national levels affect headquarters-subsidiary configuration.

Chapter VIII: How do employment policies at multiple sub-national levels affect headquarters-subsidiary configurations and subsidiaries' roles?

This chapter is based on

Dekocker V. Changing headquarters-subsidiary configurations for the HR function in multinational companies : case study evidence on the influence of the sub-national level from Belgium. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* (currently under review, major revision submitted)

8.1 Introduction

The second dimension of the transfer is the headquarters-subsidary configuration. This configuration, described previously (Chapter II, p.29), refers to a tight constellation of mutually supportive elements, a set of formal and informal employment tools (Birkinshaw & Morrison, 1995:730). This structure or set of elements enables MNCs to coordinate employment practices and policies across widely disseminated subsidiaries (Brewster, 2007). In addition, it enables global management to take advantage of potential host country location advantages, by addressing specific roles to subsidiaries with regard to employment (Almond et al., 2005). The way this happens has been observed to vary between a rather formalised top-down configuration (hierarchy) and coordination between geographically spread subsidiaries (heterarchic employment configuration) (Ghoshal & Nohria, 1989, 1993; Malnight 2001). Both types go along with respectively less and more employment competences addressed to the subsidiaries and other subsidiaries' roles.

Explaining these specific subsidiaries' roles in literature happens by using the resource-based view. Central to this theoretical perspective is the idea that specific subsidiaries' roles are competitive for an MNC. Specifically it is expected that a configuration will be reformed if it results in a more competitive configuration. Put differently: if employment policies at sub-national levels are contributing to MNCs' competitive position. Therefore the current chapter will study how employment policies at multiple sub-national levels (level of regional government and inter-firm level) alter the headquarters-subsidary configurations and subsidiaries' roles. The focus will initially be on training policies because the previous chapters have shown limited variation in pay policies caused by limited resources, limited competitive advantage for pay policies or the nature of pay policies. Moreover, inter-firm and regional policies and not the subsidiary level are considered as location advantages as the former two have been defined as external to the subsidiary (Rugman & Verbeke, 2001; Wernerfelt, 1984).

To examine the headquarters-subsidary configuration, the remainder of the chapter will be structured as follows. First, the literature review gives an insight into the resource-based view and how it evolved. Thereafter it explains how employment policies at sub-national levels can be considered location advantages. Moreover it will explain how these policies can contribute to the competences of MNCs taking Bartlett and Ghoshal as a point of departure. This will be followed by a short description of employment policies at sub-national levels like location advantages in Belgium. The next section presents an in-depth description of headquarters-subsidary configurations and subsidiaries' roles and how employment policies at sub-national levels alter these subsidiary roles.

8.2 The resource-based view for the study on headquarters-subsidary configurations: Origin and evolution

Over the last thirty years, numerous ideal types of headquarters-subsidary configurations have been formulated, all taking into account the changing environmental challenges and resources MNCs face (Birkinshaw & Morrison 1995; Cantwell & Mudambi 2005). Initially these configurations considered the MNC as a vertically integrated entity. Central to more recent typologies is that MNCs are considered as multi-unit organisations each comprising of a set of particular resources and operational in a particular environment (Andersson et al., 2007; Delany 2000). As such, a differentiated approach towards each subsidiary is required (Birkinshaw & Morrison 1995; Morgan, Kristensen & Whitley 2001). This new image of the MNC as a network of interdepending subsidiaries was introduced and systematised by Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989). By combining two criteria the strategic importance of the local environment (high-low) and the competence of the national subsidiary (high-low), four potential roles (figure 15) were appointed to national subsidiaries.

Figure 15 Different subsidiaries' roles based on the typology of Bartlett and Ghoshal

Strategic importance of local environment	High	Black hole	Strategic leader
	Low	Implementer	Contributor
		Low	High
		Competence of local organization	

Bartlett and Ghoshal (1986) in Rugman et al. (2011:255)

Without neglecting the importance of this classification, some authors have argued for conceptually updating it. They stated that there is an increasing prevalence of policies at sub-national levels within the internationalisation process (Edwards et al., 2012; Rugman et al., 2011). This refers to national countries no longer being the main distinctive borders for location advantages (Crouch et al., 2009). Rather, intermediate structures like the web of inter-firm relations and the regional governments gain importance. The explanation for this shift in importance is explained because regional governments

provide for initiatives facilitating learning between companies. Furthermore, employment policies at sub-national levels provide for collective goods like qualified employees, cooperative labour relations with employees and a reliable infrastructure (Heidenreich, 2012). Second, the classification needs an update because of its focus on aggregate subsidiaries' roles (Ferner 1997, Ferner et al. 2004; Ghoshal & Nohria, 1989, 1993). Very often MNCs consist of mutual interdependent subsidiaries. In this case, not all subsidiaries are responsible for all value adding activities. Therefore they comprise other resources and take up other roles (Höltbrugge & Möhr 2011; Porter, 1985).

Following the argument of Rugman et al.(2011), this chapter therefore focuses on employment policies at sub-national levels and employment as a separate business function in MNCs because of two reasons. First of all the configuration is considered as strategic because it can contribute to MNCs' aims. By setting up a particular headquarters-subsidiary configuration, it creates links between competences, skills and behaviour of employees and companies' goals (through, for example, variable pay and vocational training) (Colbert, 2004). Second, employment is interesting as this business function is generally expected to be sensitive to sub-national location advantages (Lerxtundi & Landeta, 2012). More specific, competitive skills and competences or knowledge of employees are found to differ between clusters of companies or regional governments (Crouch et al. 2009; Heidenreich, 2012).

Based here on, the employment policies at sub-national levels, as shaped by social actors, are expected to affect the headquarters-subsidiary configurations. Specifically, in line with the previous chapter, if subsidiaries have access to competitive employment policies at sub-national levels, it is expected that this will not only affect discretion but also its competence in setting up or gaining access to policies (Bélanger et al., 2013). Changing competences will accordingly alter the subsidiary role vis-à-vis the headquarters. In MNCs the changing roles are, for example, reflected in the number of committees subsidiaries are member of. However, the subsidiaries' competence or role will only be affected when employment policies at sub-national levels are complementary. This first of all refers to the contribution to MNCs' employment aims for the subsidiary under consideration. As previously stated, contribution to MNCs' objectives depends on the similarity between the goals of social actors and of the MNCs' headquarters. As chapter V illustrates, subsidiaries' social actors shaped employment policies at sub-national levels to their employment aims. This does not, however, mean that these policies are in accordance with MNCs' employment aims. After all, conflicts between subsidiaries and headquarters have been observed (Edwards et al.,2007a; Pulignano, 2006). In addition, as some of these policies are part of a system of industrial relations and collective bargaining, the policies created are not always fully in line with MNCs' aims. Second, complementarity refers to the reinforcing of the compensating character of the employment policies at sub-national levels. Altering competences and roles is only to be expected in the presence of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels.

What these employment policies at sub-national levels look like in Belgium will be briefly repeated in the next chapter. Furthermore, this section will describe how these policies can contribute to MNCs' competitive advantage.

8.3 Headquarters-subsidiary configurations and employment policies at sub-national levels in Belgium

As the aim is to investigate how employment policies at sub-national levels result in an adapted typology, configurations and the employment policies at sub-national levels are first of all defined. The second part of this section illustrates how employment policies at sub-national levels have the potential to influence headquarters-subsidiary configurations and subsidiaries' roles. For this illustration, the typology of Bartlett and Ghoshal is used as a point of departure as it is one of the most influential ones within the field (Rugman et al., 2011). This section will then outline how employment policies at sub-national levels (regional government and inter-firm level) fit within the typology. It ends by drawing propositions for the Belgian context.

8.3.1 Configurations as strategic and employment policies at sub-national levels

As previously stated, MNCs emphasise the need for a skilled workforce and competences as highly strategic nowadays because of the economic context in which they are operational (Noe, 2003). Indeed, within the coming years, a lot of OECD countries will be confronted with a shortage of skilled people because baby boomers leave the labour market and not enough new employees enter the market. As a consequence, vacancies will stay open and a war for talent is expected to take place, definitely for some key functions. In this context, headquarters-subsidiary configurations within MNCs will become increasingly strategic as they consist of a unique set of policies and instruments. This means that not only the specific knowledge or skills of employees can be core resources but also systems or policies and the way they have been organised within the MNC (Colbert, 2004). In this respect, literature talks about strategic human resource management (in the remainder referred to as configuration¹⁵) as human skills, competences or routines have been built up over time and as such are not easy to imitate (Colbert, 2004; Jun & Shuai, 2012). Apart from the internal resources, also the operating environment like the regional government and the inter-firm level can foresee in competitive resources. The former is defined as a formal constitution or regulations applicable in a particular area or territory (Lane & Wood, 2009). These regional governments are often supported by regional development agencies designed to promote indigenous economic development. The latter occurs by

¹⁵ Human resource management is not used to avoid confusion on terminology. See chapter II, p.31

offering companies instruments like advice (general management markets, production and technologies), financial support (grants, equity, loans) and infrastructure (training, factories) (Phelps et al., 2003). The inter-firm level refers to agglomerations of small and medium-sized companies characterised by institutionalised cooperation (Pyke and Sengenbenger 1992; Zeitlin 2004). Specific systems of training, recruitment or pay and the quality of relations between managers and employees and their respective representative ¹⁶organisations, mobility and reskilling are the main important distinctive factors (Pyke & Sengenberger, 1992). Thus the focus is on two sub-national levels that can result in location advantages which can differ between inter-firm levels and regional governments and among companies within one country. After having listed these two location advantages, the next paragraphs will describe how these policies at sub-national levels fit within the Bartlett and Ghoshal typology.

8.3.2 How do employment levels at sub-national levels fit into the Bartlett and Ghoshal configuration

The typology of Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) combines two criteria: location advantages and firm competences (table 12). Location advantages (external resources) are understood as sub-national policies allowing to distinguish oneself from the main competitors (Colbert, 2004). Firm competences (or internal resources) reflect whether the subsidiary is considered as being able to access or make use of these employment policies at sub-national levels in setting up employment policies. If this is the case, subsidiaries develop specific internal resources that might be of interest for MNCs' headquarters.

8.3.2.1 Location advantages

The first dimension of the Bartlett and Ghoshal typology refers to the presence of policies at sub-national levels as location advantages (table 12). Location advantages are hereby understood as attracting factors for a specific location where MNCs want to invest in. In addition it refers to locations where MNCs see the potential to shape policies in order to develop more favourable policies (Almond et al., 2014). Both regional governments and the inter-firm level have the potential to offer location advantages because of a delegation of employment responsibilities to the regional government in the last decennium (Cognard, 2011). Moreover, regional development agencies have offered a wide range of services and infrastructure for companies within the field of employment (Phelps et al. 2003). Accordingly, differences between these regional agencies can result in different location advantages

¹⁶ As previously stated, the subsidiary level is not taken into account as location advantages explicitly refer to the external environment the subsidiary is located in (Rugman et al. 2011).

for companies. This is particularly the case when these regional agencies are funded by regional governments in a federal state. In this case, they represent the interests of the regional coalition and potentially emphasise other priorities than other regional governments (Halkier & Danson, 1997).

The inter-firm level foresees in location advantages as a consequence of shared information, shared knowledge and participation in institutions (Molina-Moralez & Martinez-Fernandez, 2008; Zeitlin 2004). The availability of information, the availability of a skilled or specialised workforce and the participation in local institutions result in a number of initiatives. Furthermore it gives support in line with companies' needs as they are in touch with a large number of companies. Moreover, the services delivered can be organised at a low cost. These advantages are, however, not available for all companies as access to location advantages results from membership. Specifically, collective resources are available for members. Accordingly 'member-companies' can take advantage of this as opposed to non-members (Molina-Moralez & Martinez-Fernandez, 2008; Zeitlin, 2004).

Tabel 12 Location advantages and subsidiaries' competences for headquarters-subsidiary configurations

	Regional government	Inter-firm level
Location advantages (external resources)	Regional policies for recruitment, training and pay	Shared information Shared knowledge Participation of local institutions
Subsidiary competences (= internal resources)	Subsidiaries' ability to gain access to these employment policies at sub-national levels	

8.3.2.2 Subsidiary competences

The second dimension of the typology deals with subsidiaries' competences. Subsidiaries' competences are generally described as competences given by the MNCs' headquarters or acquired by the subsidiary itself (Rugman et al., 2011). In our study the focus is on how this competence can change when studying sub-national location advantages, because local managers or trade unions have access or the knowledge to benefit from them. It is expected that being part of an inter-firm level or being located in a particular region affects the way competences are addressed. This is particularly expected to be the case when location advantages and changed subsidiaries' competences are competitive for MNCs' position (Benneworth & Hoppers 2006; Coulson & Ferrario 2007).

A related concept in this regard is reverse diffusion, referring to the process in which the subsidiary is considered competent to reverse transfer the sub-national advantage to the headquarters and

throughout the organisation (Edwards & Tempel 2007). This process for example can occur when local subsidiaries have access to information that is not available for the headquarters (Andersson et al. 2007). At first this may seem like increasing the competence for the subsidiary under consideration. Edwards (1998) however, distinguishes between three forms of reverse diffusion: reverse diffusion as purposeful to control internal resources within the subsidiaries, reverse diffusion initiated by the subsidiaries' managers or spontaneous reverse diffusion. It has been assumed that the first form most frequently occurs within MNCs' subsidiaries and as such reflects a certain degree of hierarchy, although not equal to any of the subsidiary's competences. In addition, some sub-national location advantages can be locally bound, affecting the subsidiary's role in a negative way (Rugman et al. 2011). This means that sub-national advantages can also lead to subsidiary isolation when competences (internal resources) cannot be used in other subsidiaries or the headquarters (Anderson et al., 2007). This would result in a decrease in subsidiary's competences. To conclude, it is expected that employment policies at sub-national levels can be considered as location advantages and can affect subsidiaries' roles in Belgium. The next section will briefly repeat these policies.

8.3.3 Employment policies at sub-national levels in Belgium

The regional government, the sector and the web of inter-firm relations in Belgium are expected to shape the configuration between headquarters and subsidiaries and subsidiaries' roles. Specifically, they can provide for location advantages by delivering services like vocational training, sector specific instruments or recruitment advices. In addition, knowledge of and access to these initiatives is necessary to benefit from them.

The first level encompasses regions and their agencies that fund the employment bodies (public as well as private) and provide incentives to promote, for example, vocational training of some target groups but also offer training cheques to companies. In addition, sectors can rely on the agencies to develop sector initiatives. The main difference between regional governments relate to the level of funding and the scope of the policies. Secondly, the inter-firm level in Belgium is found in the system of collective bargaining and web of inter-firm relations. Differences between sectors in location advantages can be traced back to two aspects: training for blue-collar workers is organised with collective means but not every sector has a training centre to ameliorate the alignment with sector requests; vocational training for white-collar workers is usually organised across joint committees, although in some committees additional training for white-collar workers is planned. The second interpretation of the inter-firm level is the web of inter-firm relations. Within these groups of companies, the existence of specific employment relations is often funded by regionalised domains like industrial policy and vocational training. Regional governments and their agencies are then

supportive institutions for cooperation between companies. As previously mentioned, a funded collaboration can be set up with surrounding educational organisations to develop specific skills (Molina-Morales & Martinez-Fernandez 2008). As such, there is employment specialisation in line with local needs and a division of labour in line with the value chain within the local environment which remains a specific competitive advantage for cluster companies (Hervas-Oliver & Albors-Garrigos 2007). As complementarity is expected to occur between sub-national levels, the following proposition is formulated: employment policies at multiple sub-national levels will affect headquarters' subsidiary configurations. Following Bartlett and Ghoshal, altered headquarters-subsidiary configuration is expected to occur by two mechanisms. First of all these policies, if competitive, will be considered as location advantages. Moreover, these location advantages affect subsidiaries' competence. As a consequence, subsidiaries' roles will be altered. Following paragraphs will investigate how, if any, competitive policies at sub-national levels, considered as location advantages, will alter subsidiaries' roles.

8.4 Presenting an adapted typology

This section uses empirical findings to illustrate two elements of subsidiaries' roles emphasised in literature 1) how the employment policy in MNCs' subsidiaries in Belgium is shaped by the sub-national location advantages and 2) how they altered subsidiaries' competences. The companies with absence of competences are Packaging and ICT contrary to Waste and Food.

8.4.1 MNCs' competences and location advantages

Packaging-no location advantages/only competences for the Walloon subsidiary. Packaging Belgium has three subsidiaries, each representing another division; the Walloon and Brussels subsidiary are managed together. For each business division, and so for each Belgian subsidiary, there is a highly controlled headquarters-subsidiary configuration and little room for local adaptation. Specifically, the European level and the corporate level are all control levels. For example, managers from all Western European countries met on a three-monthly basis and systems were set up to exchange best practices. The approach of the subsidiaries in Belgium can be summarised as follows:

'We're in the same structure, I report directly to the Vice President of HR, at the level of Western Europe. Each corporate value is to be extended to everyone and applied. For what concerns structures, what is called top management, appraisals, we implement this.' (Packaging, HR Manager)

Other similarities for the Packaging subsidiaries were found with regard to the location advantages. Specifically, the sector in which the subsidiaries were operational, did not offer a wide range of services or infrastructure to the companies. Quite the opposite is applicable for Packaging at the time of data collection though future plans for training are made. As previously mentioned:

'Until this year, our members were not willing to invest on the sector level as it is a tight market and they are all competitors. It took a lot of effort to convince the board of directors of the relevance of training and other possibilities on sector level.' (Packaging, Director Employers' Federation)

In addition, the services of regional development agencies were not used and they were not part of webs of inter-firm relations. Although it seems that subsidiaries are similar, an important difference should be noticed. Where the Flemish subsidiary had been taken over in the period of data collection, because of the tight market, the Walloon subsidiary was of a different kind. This subsidiary has, since its origin, been functioning as a pilot company in which new procedures and systems were tested. This took place within the production sphere and with regard to employment. In other words, if processes of systems were observed as contributing to the global divisions' interest, they were transferred from the Walloon subsidiary to other subsidiaries within the business division:

'Le rubix, c'est mon bébé, if we need to change, we need to be able to map the skills needed in order to attract the right employees or retrain them, so for every employee we mapped which skills were missing with our newly installed techniques , ... This rubix, I have to implement it now together with n+1 and n+2 for all the subsidiaries in the business division, we are talking about 70 companies.' (Packaging, HR manager)

ICT-no competences-location advantages for the headquarters. ICT is an MNC headquartered in Belgium with subsidiaries in Romania and the Netherlands. It is growing fast, not only through mergers but also by growing organically. The MNC has a strong centralised focus. Specifically, it is organised based on five international business divisions each having a manager and a global HR manager. Moreover, ICT has set up shared services. For example, ICT foresaw international e-learning systems and made use of similar templates for all subsidiaries:

'I've now been back from Romania, I've been there in order to ensure that they know how Belgium is working so they can take over. I visit all the subsidiaries. Yes, with all my USB-sticks and with all my templates. In Wallonia we are also involved in the work and in the Netherlands we help them to implement.' (ICT, HR manager)

The main difference between the subsidiaries relates to sub-national involvement, which is the case for the Flemish subsidiary (where the headquarters is located). Specifically, there is a close link with educational institutions. In this regard, the subsidiary organises guest lectures and info sessions for future ICT profiles. This is rewarding since a lot of graduates engage in the summer school and immediately start in ICT .

'It is the aim to get an insight into what graduates are capable of and to be the first to pick the good ones.' (ICT, HR manager)

For the sector in which ICT is operational, no differences can be found because of the lacking sub-national location advantages. As previously stated:

'The sector centre is mainly used for training the support functions, for ICT the company needs specific programs like the ones offered by companies like IBM and Cetrix, they are really experienced in the IT world.' (ICT, Union representative)

Waste-changed competences and location advantages. The complete opposite was found in the case of Waste. Waste is an MNC operating in the sector of industrial cleaning and waste collection. The MNC is located in the UK, has subsidiaries in five countries worldwide and has four subsidiaries in Belgium, all composed of former SMEs. All subsidiaries are strongly locally or regionally embedded as they are part of a web of inter-firm relations or informal networks (waste collection for municipalities or web of inter-firm relations). In addition they have close links to other companies or universities. Because of this, Belgian subsidiaries gained competences regarding employment, resulting in a limited overall management strategy:

'For me it was very surprising that a company of 1.200 people had no overarching HR or HR structure and was not represented within the executive management team. Previously, you just had every site manager reporting directly to the managing director. That was actually the structure that existed up to half a year ago.' (Waste, HR manager)

Regarding the configuration in general, the Belgian HR manager undertook several attempts to set up a hierarchical structure, but was unsuccessful due to the location advantages and firm competences for the subsidiaries. First of all, all subsidiaries are operational in the waste industry which means that the regional government forces them to organise training sessions on safety. Specifically in Belgium, environmental issues and vocational training were regionalised during the state reform. This means that the regional government determines the content of the training and sectors organises the training

sessions. Local managers and trade unions are important as they assure access to these obligatory training sessions allowing Waste to execute its main activity.

For the Walloon subsidiary, an additional location advantage is observed. As the MNCs' market position was threatened, Belgian management saw the newly created Walloon government, of which the green party was a member contrary to the configuration of the other regional governments, as useful for its activities. As such, Waste could make clear its interest in green waste treatment and reinforce its market position by being the first using a particular type of green waste treatment. This was made possible thanks to a close collaboration between the Walloon government, surrounding universities and the presence of MNCs and SMEs. More specifically, at the core of this competence centre, there was an R&D centre in close interaction with Waste, developing new methods, financially supported by the government and venture capitalists and staffed with personnel from universities. Moreover, closely linked with this centre, an HR centre has been set up in order to retrain and recruit employees, preparing them to work with these new methods. The provision of this web of inter-firm relations increased the competence of the Walloon subsidiary, as lobbying with the regional government was done by the local management. In addition, formalising employment policies within the web of inter-firm relations was built based on negotiations with other companies.

Food-changed competences and location advantages based on divisions. Finally, the company Food reflects configurations that are based on divisions. Specifically, employment in the first business division focuses on employability and cost reduction in the packaging department. In the second division the focus is on R&D skills, as the aim is to obtain a patent. Although both business divisions are operational in a sector characterised by a well-developed training centre, it only affected the first business division.

In collaboration with the regional government, the sector has invested in a simulation company in order to train employees in deal with flaws in the packaging department in the food sector. In addition, a high per centage of the funding has been spent to skill development for increasing employment security in case of restructuring. As such the sub-national location advantages are much more in line with the first business division of Food. Furthermore, as this subsidiary is the most profitable in the business division, a certain degree of reverse diffusion is observed. For example criteria for variable pay or simulation company have been reversely transferred to the remaining subsidiaries in the business division.

Based on the description of the MNCs, it can be concluded that integrating employment policies at sub-national levels alters advantages and firm competences This is particularly the case when more than one employment policy is at place. The next section will therefore examine this proposition.

8.4.2 How integrating employment policies at sub-national levels affects subsidiaries' roles

This final section illustrates how taking into account the employment policies at sub-national levels addresses other roles to subsidiaries as opposed to the ones that were found based on the evidence on the national level only. As figure 16 illustrates, employment policies at sub-national levels affect location advantages and firm competences, causing three movements within our case studies. The following paragraphs will discuss them one after another.

Figure 16 Adapted subsidiaries' roles after integrating employment policies at sub-national levels

Location advantages	<u>Black hole</u> <i>Packaging</i> <i>ICTF</i>	<u>Strategic Leader</u> FOOD <i>Food Business division 1 FW</i> <i>Waste W</i> <i>Waste B</i> <i>Waste F</i>
	<u>Implementer</u> ICT PACKAGING <i>Food business division 2 FW</i> <i>Food B</i> <i>ICTB</i> <i>ICT W</i>	<u>Contributor</u> WASTE
Subsidiaries' competences		

Figure 1. Influence of the sub-national level for headquarters-subsidiary configurations

* names in bold are the companies without taking into account the sub-national level

** names in italic are the companies after taking into account the sub-national level

*** F= Flemish subsidiary, W= Walloon Subsidiary, B= Brussels subsidiary

From contributor to strategic leader. The first possible adjustment based on the integration of employment policies at sub-national levels is found in Waste. If the study would only have considered Waste Belgium, it would have observed a configuration without any formal policies or structures that could independently function from the headquarters (=heterarchy). In addition, no location advantages on the national level would have been observed. So based on the classification, Waste would have been put in the list of Contributor, because the main activity of Waste, waste collection and treatment,

is a regional responsibility. Consequently, integrating the regional governments and their agencies points to the existence of obligatory training sessions provided by these governments and their agencies in collaboration with the sectors. As these training sessions must be followed by all employees in order to remain operational, subsidiaries are assumed to be competent in order to access these sessions. Put differently, for global management it is far more efficient when skills are obtained, even if it increases subsidiaries' competences and decreases central control. This results in labelling the cases of Waste, after integrating policies at sub-national levels, as strategic leaders. However, there is also a difference in degree between the subsidiaries. For the case of Waste in the Walloon region, the extent of location advantages and subsidiary's competences was higher than for the other cases. Because of the funded web of inter-firm relations, specific employment services like recruitment channels, mobility programs or training and reward systems have been set up among companies. Since one of the key characteristics of this web of inter-firm relations is the informal relation between the management, local management is held responsible for engaging in these informal relations. This increased subsidiary's competences.

From implementer to black hole. Key to the second movement is that the policies at sub-national level levels foresee in(future) location advantages valued by the subsidiaries. Headquarters, however, are still in control and policies at sub-national levels do not alter subsidiaries' competences. Illustrative in this regard is the pilot company of Packaging in the Walloon region. In this subsidiary, processes and systems are being tested and when proven efficient, they are reversely transferred. In addition the sector plans to have future training sessions which might be of interest for Packaging. Although the subsidiary can develop own systems, the nature of the subsidiary as being a pilot company, has been installed by higher organisational levels and as such newly developed processes or systems do not change the competence of the Walloon subsidiary. Therefore, Packaging Walloon is seen as a Black Hole. This would not have been the case if the study had focused on the national level only. In this case a hierarchy for each business division would have been observed without any location advantages. Accordingly, Packaging Belgium would have been labelled as Implementer. Similarly ICT in the Flemish region has close connections with educational institutions, although it is the global policy to approach these institutions to attract the well-performing graduates before other employers hire them. In the Flemish subsidiary there is a specific sub-national location advantage because the subsidiary in Flanders (ICTF) is the only subsidiary that gives courses to the students. In so doing, students meet and can engage to follow an additional summer school provided by ICT. Taken this into account, ICTF, as opposed to ICT in the other two regions should be considered as a Black Hole and not as an Implementer because the presence of a sub-national recruitment channel does not affect its competences, only its sub-national location advantages.

From strategic leader to implementer. The third scenario has been observed in Food. Not integrating the sub-national level would have resulted in a role for Food as Strategic Leader because of the presence of a well-developed training centre supported by the regional government. The differentiation is difficult to observe as more than one business division is present in the different subsidiaries. However, when looking at business divisions separately, the study shows the limited location advantages for the second division because of its international focus. Contrary, the first business division has a Belgian HR manager and benefits from the collective services. As the subsidiary is the best performer in its business division, reverse diffusion has been observed together with increased subsidiaries' competences. This is, however, another type of reverse diffusion than was the case with Packaging, as it is less controlled or formally implemented by the headquarters. Therefore the first business division of Food is still labelled as strategic leader, for the other divisions, the role of Implementer is adopted.

8.5 Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated that the analysis of subsidiaries' roles benefits from the integration of the regional government, the sector and the web of inter-firm relations to adopt a more appropriate role of subsidiaries within MNCs' network. Our adapted conceptualisation suggests that employment policies at sub-national levels may cause other subsidiaries' roles to emerge. This implies that a classification of subsidiaries based on the national level only, is limited in fully capturing the subsidiaries' role. In addition, the chapter has demonstrated that policies at sub-national levels did not affect subsidiaries to a similar extent. In some cases, they did alter subsidiaries' positions because of location advantages such as a newly created web of inter-firm relations supported by the government. In other cases the changed role was a consequence of the presence of well-developed centres on the sector level.

The findings of the present chapter, as was the case in the previous chapter, have shown the relevance of integrating employment policies at sub-national levels into the study of the transfer. For the present chapter, it showed that the resource-based view indeed benefits from integrating sub-national location advantages when studying subsidiaries' roles. In doing so, it fits with the literature emphasizing the importance of taking into account different host country advantages (Almond, 2011, Morgan, 2007). In addition, by focusing on employment, it is in line with studies emphasising the need to differentiate between (support) functions within the subsidiary. Existing literature has undeniably focused on the relation between headquarters and subsidiaries without making a distinction between the different business functions (e.g. HRM, R&D, marketing) present in a subsidiary (for an overview see Dunning

& Lundan 2008). Studies on configurations and subsidiaries' roles have considered the subsidiary as homogenous (Rugman et al., 2011).

The previous three chapters each have discussed three configurations of social actors, employment policies at sub-national levels and a dimension of the transfer. In doing so, the questions as described in the introduction were answered. However, the main research proposition: do social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries by shaping sub-national policies remains unanswered. The final synthesising chapter will tackle this question by integrating the theoretical frameworks used and the evidence presented in the previous chapters.

Chapter IX: Synthesis

9.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have found social actors to shape employment policies at sub-national levels by using multiple resources. These policies were in turn found to shape these levels but also to affect the transfer of pay and training policies and practices vis-à-vis headquarters. Both these findings will be integrated in this chapter by reflecting upon the central research proposition. In so doing, the theoretical frameworks, institutional entrepreneurship, the business system approach and the resource-based view will be combined. In addition the partial findings used as evidence for both propositions are integrated to examine the main research proposition.

9.2 Integrated theoretical framework

The focus on employment policies at sub-national levels within the study on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries has contributed to a more elaborated understanding of diverging or locally adapted employment policies and practices. Therefore, the resource-based view and the business system approach went beyond the national level as the main business system or location advantage. However, integrating the sub-national levels in these theoretical frameworks did not suffice to overcome another criticism raised with regard to studies on the topic: the limited conceptualisation of social actors (Morgan, 2007). The latter refers to theoretical vagueness on the role actors play in the definition of MNCs' policies and practices. This theoretical vagueness is found in the BS approach and in the resource-based view. For example, the BS approach argues that the transfer of managerial structures and practices between countries and cultures by MNCs depends on the institutional structures of host countries and on the relative balance of power between firms and institutions in home and host countries (Whitley, 1994). Similarly within the resource-based view, the agent dimension is referred to as MNCs seeking for (future) competitive location advantages. These location advantages are assumed to be created through the intervention of powerful agents like MNCs (Ferner et al., 2012).

However, how this intervention is organised or takes place is not sufficiently conceptualised in current studies on the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Both frameworks, the business system approach and the resource-based view do acknowledge the position of social actors but fail to fully conceptualise their role. Studies on diverging employment policies so far did not integrate the idea of institutional entrepreneurship and co-evolution to conceptualise the role of social actors as actively engaging in employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. The current thesis did consider subsidiaries' actors as institutional entrepreneurs. In doing so, the role and the action of the actors do not result from variation in the conventions and rules of the game

established by dominant institutions (capital and labour) (Whitley, 2000). Put differently, companies and other actors should not be considered as over-determined by their institutional environment, leaving little scope for local autonomy. Rather, social actors need to be seen as active agent shaping policies and making use of these shaped policies to mediate the transfer. To explain how this occurs, a non-functionalist interpretation of the concept of complementarity was used. This refers first of all to employment policies at reinforcing or compensating sub-national levels in which the latter can compensate for the deficiencies of a particular level. Second it refers to the alignment with social actors' aims. In our study, alignment with social actors' aims refer to subsidiaries' social actors and headquarters' aims. Particularly, subsidiaries' social actors will shape policies in line with their aims. In turn these shaped policies will mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs subsidiaries only if they contribute to headquarters' aims. Based on this integrated theoretical framework, the next section will investigate the main proposition. It will rely on evidence of the three previous chapters.

9.3 Do subsidiaries' social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries by shaping employment policies at multiple sub-national levels?

9.3.1 Case study analysis

Without repeating all the results in detail, the first section will shortly report on the findings per multinational: it will summarise the evidence on shaping employment policies at sub-national levels and on how these policies are used by subsidiaries' social actors to mediate different dimensions of the transfer: control, centralisation, discretion and subsidiaries' roles.

Waste. Waste is the case where employment policies at multiple sub-national levels have been used to mediate the transfer of training policies and practices by subsidiaries' social actors. In this respect, it is a very good example of the compensating or reinforcing nature of multiple policies. Specifically, subsidiaries' social actors shaped employment policies at the level of the regional government, sector, inter-firm and company level. In turn, complementing policies were used to mediate the transfer. Indeed, for vocational training, complementarity between the regional government and the sector as well as between the regional government and the inter-firm levels inhibited the extent of control and centralisation and fostered subsidiaries' discretion. Moreover, it affected the subsidiaries' roles, because training sessions were needed to execute the main activity and to expand the R&D pillar. For pay policies, complementarity was found between the sector and site or subsidiary level. Specifically, subsidiaries' social actors succeeded in negotiating a basic package on the sector level in order to

differentiate between the sites. This way, site specific benefits that were obtained, remained and central pay instruments were not set up. The case of Waste has been labelled as social actors making use of policies at sub-national levels to mediate the transfer. This way a continuous interaction between policies at sub-national levels and social actors' behaviour takes place.

Food. The case of Food is similar to the case of Waste, but only for the first business division and only for the training policy. Specifically, the aim of subsidiaries' social actors resulted in a simulation company to train blue-collar workers. Moreover, elaborated services on the sector level were foreseen in order to foster employability and guarantee employment in case of restructuring. As a consequence, the first business division obtained discretion regarding training policies and central control was inhibited as access was obtained through the subsidiaries. For pay policies, the presence of attractive pension funds which allowed to recruit easily, did not affect subsidiaries' discretion or inhibit control and centralisation. Although it did contribute to the employment aims of the local subsidiary, it was not being considered as competitive from headquarters' point of view. Rather, the headquarters emphasised the profitability of the first business division by increasing the employability of blue-collar workers (replace one another during holidays) and investing in the least profitable section (the packaging division for which a simulation company has been set up). For the second business division, employment policies at sub-national levels were similar, but they were not in line with the subsidiaries' social actors nor with the headquarters' employment aims. As such it did not affect the transfer.

For ICT and Packaging no evidence could be found for social actors mediating the transfer by shaping employment policies at sub-national levels. However the reasons for the absence of any evidence differed in both cases. For ICT, there were employment policies on sub-national levels for training and pay policies; these policies, however, were not in line with headquarters' and subsidiaries' employment aims. For Packaging, in the case of the pilot company, a similar reasoning as in ICT could be made. In the Flemish subsidiary, however, there were no employment policies for training as the employers' federation did not agree on the necessity of these services. For pay policies an agreement was made within the sector, however, headquarters did not find these policies competitive and as such no mediation has been observed.

9.3.2 Discussion

Based on cross-comparative analysis, it can be concluded that social actors do mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices but only if two conditions are met: the presence of employment policies at more than one sub-national level and the alignment between subsidiaries' and headquarters'

aims. Specifically, multiple employment policies are needed in order to have a reinforcing or compensating effect. In addition, the formed employment policies need to be attractive for both subsidiaries and for headquarters, otherwise there is no benefit in subsidiaries' discretion or another subsidiaries' roles and inhibiting control and centralisation to access these competitive employment policies at sub-national levels (table 13).

The answer to our general research proposition should, however, be nuanced by the findings of the second business division of Food and ICT. Central to ICT and the second business division of Food is the recent multinational character. As found in chapter VI, the historic specific context plays a role. Particularly, a longstanding participation within committees and in the board of directors as well as the maintenance of employment policies on the level, are explanatory for the presence of alternative employment policies. In this respect it was expected that the subsidiaries of ICT, already had a longstanding character within Belgium and were engaged in employment policies at sub-national levels. Contrary to Waste however, these ICT subsidiaries had not been part of a multinational company. As such, the core characteristics of MNCs, being present in more than one context and having the possibility to shape the variety of contexts in line with MNCs' objectives was less present. Accordingly, it can be expected that the existence as an MNC can be explanatory as well.

Related to this, the growth phase of a multinational character is also worth mentioning when taken the results of ICT into account. Specifically, the lifecycle of the product or service has often been used to classify companies. It points to different stages of internationalisation like developing new markets and growth or lowering costs. After all, a company first started as a domestic company and becomes more international over time as the number of countries and subsidiaries increases (Westeney & Zaheer, 2013). In the first phase of internationalisation, control is executed based on personal relations between the headquarters and the first formal subsidiary without formal mechanic control systems. As the number of foreign value adding activities increases, a number of potential conflicts arise between the headquarters and subsidiaries on the one hand and among subsidiaries on the other hand. Similarly, MNCs try to combine pressures of national integration with local responsiveness. Against this background, mechanisms as task forces, teams and committees have been set up to align the subsidiaries with the companies' aims. In a further stage, some companies evolved towards a more heterarchic company, sometimes labelled as the transnational company. Within this company, specific control mechanisms are less installed, rather normative integration based on common values contributed to this integration (for an overview see Rugman, 2013). So the presence of policies at multiple sub-national levels and the alignment with social actors' aims should also be framed within the historic specific context of the MNCs and their subsidiaries.

Table 13 Synthesis

		Transfer			
		Shaping employment policies at sub-national levels			
		Employment policies at reinforcing or compensating sub-national levels	Employment policies at complementary sub-national levels and subsidiary social actors' aims	Accordance between subsidiaries' social actors' aims and headquarters' aims	Do subsidiaries' social actors mediate the transfer of pay and training policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries by shaping employment policies at sub-national levels?
Waste	Waste Wallonia	+++	+++	+++	+
	Waste Flanders/Waste Brussels	++	+++	+++	+
Food	Business division 1	++	+++	++	+
	Business division 2	+	-	-	-
Packaging	Packaging Flanders	+	+	-	-
	Packaging Wallonia (+ Brussels)	-	-	-	-
ICT	ICT	-	-	-	-

Part IV: Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

Besides national policies as location advantages and regulatory levels, employment policies at sub-national levels have been found to be increasingly important when studying employment within MNCs. Not only do formal organisations offer services to companies, informal networks between companies can result in competitive employment policies and practices as well. Regional employment policies, inter-firm employment policies or subsidiaries' specific policies can reflect the presence of vocational training institutes, social funds or policies that have remained over time and that subsidiaries can make use of. As became clear within the preceding chapters, the increasing importance of these employment policies at sub-national levels has important consequences for the study on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Not only do these policies offer resources for subsidiaries' social actors to shape these policies at sub-national levels, they are also used to mediate headquarters' control, centralisation and subsidiaries' discretion, and to alter subsidiaries' roles.

This last part will briefly summarise the most important findings from the individual chapters. Rather than repeating all the findings, the chapter will first of all focus on more general theoretical implications. Next, the chapter will reflect upon the methodological implications and challenges studies on MNCs face when investigating the transfer. As part of this section, the generalisability of the findings will be discussed. Thereafter, the chapter will discuss the policy implications of the findings. Each section will hereby include some directions for future research on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs.

10.2 Theoretical implications of the research findings

10.2.1 Research finding I: Social actors shape employment policies at multiple sub-national levels in line with their aims if there are resources to do so

Chapter VI showed two conditions to be fulfilled in order to engage in employment policies at sub-national levels. First, resources at sub-national levels need to be available at multiple levels in order for social actors to act as institutional entrepreneurs. Second, these resources need to allow subsidiaries' social actors to shape policies in line with their aims. After all, engagement is a strategic choice, meaning that social actors do not necessarily engage in employment policies at sub-national levels. The cases showed however, that the resources were not used to a similar extent. Managers made far more use of them than trade union representatives. Furthermore the resources were not always used in the expected way. Concretely, advisory boards of regional governments were expected

to function as a resource and resources at the subsidiary level were expected to be bypassed. These two resources were not found. Rather, two additional resources came up. First, informal ways and trust relations with politicians at the regional government shaped employment policies at this level. Second, on the subsidiary level, social actors made use of their strong bargaining position and the historical specific context of the subsidiary to negotiate alternative employment policies. So social actors were found to shape multiple levels by using a variety of sources on multiple levels. Based on the findings of this first empirical chapter, these policies were in turn used by social actors to mediate the transfer. In addition, these policies once more offered resources to engage in these policies. As such reformed or newly created policies were influential for and influenced by subsidiaries' social actors. In this respect, an ongoing feedback loop between subsidiaries' social actors and employment policies at sub-national levels was observed to take place.

This feedback loop more generally fits within the sociological idea of structure and agency of Giddens. By using the concept of duality of structure, it integrates the idea that structures are both the medium and the outcome of social actors' behaviour. Accordingly, social actors can draw upon rules and resources in the production and reproduction of social life. Giddens distinguishes between rules and resources as the former relates to procedures telling us how to go on (Kaperson, 2000). The concept of resources, as illustrated in our study, encompasses a power or bargaining dimension since it enables social actors to add, to a particular extent, a transformative dimension to the production of social life. In our research, resources, for example, reflect the advisory boards based on parity resulting in a particular bargaining space between subsidiary's social actors. However, resources and rules can also be constraining for social actors, when the resources do not allow to align the employment policies and social actors' aims or when resources to act upon are not present.

What is furthermore central to the concept of the duality of structure is, that not all actions are purposive, that, in other words, the reproducing of social life does not necessarily occurs consciously. This is limited in our study, because the resources available, based on parity, are a means used to put trade unions' interests and the interests of management to the front. Similarly, (re)production of social life might also have unintended consequences which affect once more the reproduction of social life. This was, for example, the case for Packaging. Specifically, the regulation on the presence of the works council was used by the Belgian management to have one works council for the Flemish operations. However, as the former sites both had separate works councils, they were able to stay in place over time and MNCs' management was unable to set up one sole works council. The initial goal for a central policy had the opposite effect.

The way employment policies at sub-national levels have been shaped and used to mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries so reflect an ongoing structuration

process between social actors and employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. The structure-agency model in this regard deviates from a mainly functionalist idea in which society exists outside the agents. Quite on the contrary, by its (re)production, social agents' embeddedness is shown. Shaping employment policies at sub-national levels and at the same time being influenced by these policies results in an endogenous process between MNCs and multiple levels.

10.2.2 Research finding II : Employment policies at multiple sub-national levels are used by social actors to mediate headquarters' control, centralisation and subsidiaries' discretion

A second and third proposition investigated how employment policies at sub-national levels are used by social actors to mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. The idea behind this proposition, is that MNCs can benefit from discretion or a different subsidiaries' roles for accessing employment policies at sub-national levels. Although these findings are based on training policies only, they reveal some interesting perspectives. Specifically, similar to the creation or adaptation of existing policies at sub-national levels, the concept of complementarity was put forward as central in explaining the transfer. Whereas for the shaping of the employment policies at sub-national levels complementarity with subsidiaries' social actors was central, the alignment with headquarters' aims for the subsidiary under consideration is central in explaining the level of the transfer. Specifically, the more employment policies are contributing to MNCs' competitive advantage, the more it will affect the transfer. Vice versa, when employment policies at sub-national levels are not complementary or no employment policies at sub-national levels are present at all, no changes in headquarters' control, centralisation and subsidiaries' roles are observed. To study the way employment policies at sub-national levels affected the transfer, our study distinguished headquarters' control, centralisation and subsidiaries' discretion on the one hand and headquarters-subsidiary configuration on the other hand. Chapter VII and VIII in line with the literature hereby respectively used the business system approach and the resource-based view as a point of departure. Accordingly, for the second proposition, as employment policies at multiple sub-national levels are used by social actors to mediate headquarters' control and subsidiaries' discretion, it can be questioned whether and how regional and inter-firm levels affect the use of the business system approach to study the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries.

Therefore the definition of a business system is considered. Originally, Whitley defined a business systems as *distinctive patterns of economic organisation that vary in their degree and mode of authoritative coordination of economic activities and in the organisation, and interconnections between owners, managers, experts and other employees* (Whitley, 2000: 33). So the initial

conceptualisation of the business system approach did not exclude policy levels or domains other than the national level (Morgan, 2007). In this respect a business system only focusing on the national levels neglects its internal divergence. This internal divergence is caused by relevant policy domains for employment on sub-national levels. These policy domains are the sphere of the state, the way skill development has been set up, the financial sphere and trust relations (Almond, 2011).

Based on the different sub-national levels considered and the interviews, relevant spheres are found on these levels. Table 14 shows how the different expressions of the employment policies at sub-national levels increase divergence within the Belgian business system (Almond, 2011). First of all, on the level of the regional government, there are four spheres or domains which have been originally distinguished for employment. Although the regional government can only exist because it is part of the federal government (sphere of the state), within Belgium it has an exclusive responsibility over particular policy domains, meaning that no higher level is granted a decision-making role. Moreover, regional governments were set up in order to solve conflicts at the national level. Taken together, the regional government is responsible for the formation of a mode of conflict (Whitley, 2000). This level of state is further reinforced by the prevalence of training institutes along regional axes (skill development). As already mentioned, vocational training was one of the policy domains that was regionalised during the state reform. In line with this, financial support was given to specific projects in particular regions as shown in the case of Waste and Food. Next to this, trust relations could emerge between different social actors on the regional level, represented in parliaments, cabinets or advisory committees.

The second diverging effect has a similar logic. Specifically, sector bargaining could exist because of the multi-layered Belgian system of collective bargaining. Furthermore, training institutions are accredited by a higher hierarchical level. This does, however, not mean that sectors cannot deviate from what was agreed upon. In the case of Food, MNCs encourage companies to spend more collective means on training. In addition, the way training was defined differed strongly between vocational training centres. In Food for example, employers agreed on delegating responsibility to the sector training centre for a more integrated HR approach. The companies in the Packaging sector could obtain an agreement on an average remuneration package on the sector level to which they were able to participate.

The web of inter-firm relations reflects the trust relations between companies. This web of inter-firm relations could foresee in particular collective employment policies and practices. Moreover, key to these clusters was the presence of internal and external financial support and specific skill systems. In the case of Food, the collaboration between SMEs and MNCs was even financially supported by the municipality. These collective services in turn maintained the trust relations. Based on these findings,

future research should therefore unravel the home and host country business system to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. In doing so, studies will not only be able to investigate the influence of policies at the national level but also of different employment policies at sub-national levels. Furthermore, by integrating within country variance, conflicting findings can be addressed.

Table 14 Reflection on the business system approach

	State	Financial	Skill	Trust relations
Regional government	x	x	x	x
Sector level	x	x	x	
Web of inter firm relations		x	x	x

10.2.3 Research finding III : Employment policies at multiple sub-national levels are used by social actors to alter subsidiaries' roles

The importance of integrating employment policies at multiple sub-national levels in the study on MNCs is furthermore supported by taking into account the findings on the headquarters-subsidiary configurations. Specifically, location advantages on multiple levels did change the subsidiaries' roles. Although these resources are considered on different levels, the central factor in changing subsidiaries' roles is that they contributed to the competitive advantage of MNCs' headquarters. Furthermore, the study showed that location advantages for employment in our study are institutional resources like systems of consultation and co-determination as well as firm specific resources like lobbying possibilities or resources from local production networks (Ferner et al., 2011; Pulignano & Keune, in press).

Based on this, it is concluded that studying employment policies and practices cannot be disconnected from the contexts in which organisations or social actors choose for a particular form or practice. Therefore, it is important to integrate the external environment in which MNCs' subsidiaries are operational, like the regional government, the sector and the web of inter-firm relations when studying employment policies and practices. This opposes neo-classical approaches of employment, emphasising the rationality of social actors. Indeed treating employment as a market relation does not take into account the complex and multiple environments. As such it fails to integrate all the pieces of the puzzle for understanding employment. Therefore, in studies on employment, the idea of

employment as embedded needs to stay or be put back on the agenda. Accordingly, social actors do not behave rationally; their rationality is socially bounded (Meardi, in press).

To conclude, the thesis fits with three more general (labour)sociological debates: the role of structure and agency, the role of within country variation and the role of the context. Specifically, MNCs and social actors within MNCs are not merely assumed to be passive followers; they rather shape employment policies at sub-national levels in line with their aims. These newly formed policies in turn influence MNCs and social actors' behaviour. Second the demand of many business and labour studies for including within country variance into the study of the transfer has been met. This has been done by incorporating the regional and inter-firm level (Almond, 2011; Heidenreich, 2012). These employment policies and practices do not only refer to the company specific relation between employer and employees but also to the regulatory and collective institutions (Boxall, in press; Meardi, in press).

10.3 Methodological implications

10.2.1 For the studies on the transfer so far

Besides these theoretical implications, two methodological implications can be added; the future integration of policies at sub-national levels in empirical studies and, related to this, the focus on multilevel analysis. Integrating the sub-national levels can indeed contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the home or host country effects in quantitative studies. Specifically, home or host country effects can be reinforced (interaction effect) or mediated (indirect effect) after integrating the employment policies at sub-national levels. The question then arises on how to quantitatively measure these policies at sub-national levels. Following proposals are made. First, respondents can be asked to what extent they make use of the services provided at the regional government level, sector and if applicable web of inter-firm relations. Second, based on the analysis of policy documents, researchers can rank different governments and sectors based on the presence of supporting initiatives. Combining both questions could result in a scale for quantitative analysis, measuring the use of supportive initiatives (for example: 0 = no initiatives, 1 = no use of supporting initiatives, 2 = limited use of limited supporting initiatives, 3 = extensive use of limited supporting initiatives, 4=extensive use of a wide range of supporting initiatives). As such, it is possible to distinguish between home and host country effects, main effects of policies at sub-national levels and reinforcing or mediating effects between these levels. Other possibilities for survey research relate to the way the sample has been set up. If a representative list of a particular home or host country is available, groups of MNCs' subsidiaries can be selected based on the location within a state or government and the sector in which

they are operational. As such, studies can compare MNCs located and operational in strongly different or similar sub-national levels. Based on a comparison between groups, scholars can gain an insight into the main and moderating effects of sub-national levels on different dimensions of the transfer of employment policies and practices within MNCs' subsidiaries in the same host country or from the same country of origin.

Related to the previous implication, our evidence illustrates that future cross-national comparative research on the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs would benefit from a multilevel approach. Among other studies (Almond, 2011; Bélanger et al., 2013), our case study evidence illustrates the relevance of policies at sub-national levels. In addition, the company, on both national and supra-national level and the interplay between these levels have been found to explain the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries, even though integrating all levels has not been studied so far (Edwards et al., 2012; Rugman et al., 2011). By using a multilevel approach, studies could integrate meaningful levels for the topic under consideration and point to the interconnectedness of these levels. As such, complementarity as observed in the thesis, is expected to be found between the company, sub-national, national and international level.

10.3.2 Can the results be generalised?

A second methodological implication is the generalisability of the findings. It concerns generalisation to other employment policies and practices, other institutional contexts and different types of companies.

Specifically, within this research, the focus was on pay and training policies and practices as both are, when compared to other employment practices, most frequently studied (Ferner et al., 2006; Marginson et al., 2010; Quintanilla et al., 2008). Our results however, are mainly based on vocational training policies and practices. The question that can be asked is to what extent the findings regarding complementary levels are also applicable to other employment policies and practices. Initially, based on the literature, it was expected that the more important an employment practice or policy is and the easier to control, the more the employment practice will be controlled for (Storey, 1989). Based on this, pay was expected to be much more controlled than training. Moreover, based on recent data on employment practices and policies in Belgium, the study concludes that there indeed are differences regarding control and discretion. As tables 15 and 16 below illustrate, pay related employment practices and policies are far more controlled. This was indeed the case in our results, although the thesis found that the presence of a competitive policy at sub-national levels and resources to shape these policies, could contribute to divergence. However, for pay policies, less resources and less

competitive advantages have been observed. This can partially be explained by the nature of pay policy (Storey, 1989). Based on these tables and the results found in the study, it is therefore expected that there is a difference between employment policies and practices but that resources and competitive policies at sub-national levels need to be taken into consideration to explain the results.

Table 15 Findings on discretion in MNCs'subsidiaries in Belgium

Pay and performance management	Mean value (1=no discretion-5=full discretion)
Employee share ownership	1.52
Performance appraisal managers	2.36
Performance appraisal LOG	3.60
Variable pay managers	2.36
Variable pay LOG	3.45
Training	
Overall training	4.10
Organisational learning	3.40
Succession planning	2.71
Communication and consultation	
Involvement of workers in work process	4.44
Attitude surveys and suggestion schemes	4.44
Provision information of workers	3.69
Trade union representation	
Trade union recognition	4.02
Union involvement	3.87
Employee consultation	3.89

Pulignano and Dekocker (2014)

*LOG= Largest Occupational Group

Table 16 Presence of control in MNCs'subsidiaries in Belgium

Control from a higher hierarchical level (e.g. regional or global headquarters)	Percentage Yes
Managerial pay and benefits packages	78.8 %
Management career progression	73.1 %
Overall labour costs	77.1 %
Headcount (number of workers)	75.6 %
Staff turnover	43 %
Absenteeism	36.4 %
Labour Productivity	46.1 %
Workforce composition in terms of diversity (e.g. gender, ethnicity, disability etc.)	42.2 %
Employee attitude and satisfaction	55.4 %

Pulignano and Dekocker (2014)

The second remark relates to the highly institutional Belgian sub-national context. Indeed, specific for the Belgian institutional context is the presence of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels. Therefore the question is asked to what extent the results are applicable in other host countries (Almond et al., 2014). In the UK for example, there are regional development agencies that function as intermediary organisations between companies and a number of skill development institutions. The role of the regional agencies has been diminished under the conservative/liberal coalition. In addition, contrary to Belgium, trade unions are not involved in these development agencies. A similar image can be seen in Ireland; informal networking between MNCs and institutions has been observed, however. Because of this, MNCs' social actors are able to establish favourable policies to attract MNCs on different sub-national levels. Other host countries like Spain and Canada have been characterised by more institutional resources. Specifically in Spain, regional rather than the national government is most often referred to when talking about government. This stems from the autonomy these regional governments and their agencies have regarding various forms of policies, like social partnership agreements between companies or HRM. However, as these regional government and their agencies are very autonomous, differences between these regions can be very high as they install their own agencies. Put differently, based on the composition of the regional governments, other policies will be put forward and other agencies will be funded. As such, location advantages and competitive policies for MNCs can differ. Similarly, in Canada, provinces have considerable autonomy regarding FDI and employment and skill development. So for Canada and Spain, it can be concluded that these agencies are important resources that social actors can rely on to shape policies at sub-national levels. However, the limited autonomy of the agencies in the UK does not mean that resources are

unavailable. These resources can exclude some actors like trade unions, but informal resources can be set up like in the case of Ireland (Almond et al., 2014). Furthermore, the recent revival of webs of inter-firm relations which are particularly important for economic performance in Germany and Italy, are characterised by specific historical resources for social actors to engage in employment policies at sub-national levels (Trigilia & Burroni, 2009). Therefore, the nature of the resources for both the level of the regional government and the inter-firm level might be different, but resources for subsidiaries' social actors to shape policies are expected to be present.

Similar questions can be asked regarding the influence of employment policies at sub-national levels on the transfer. Put differently, are social actors expected to use policies at sub-national levels to mediate the transfer? Previous empirical studies have emphasised the changing sub-national levels as contributing to their competitive advantage. Particularly, the study of Jun and Shuai (2012) showed that there is big difference in performance between companies belonging to a web of inter-firm relations and companies not belonging to the web of inter-firm relations. Similar results were found by Hervás-Oliver and Albors-Garrigos (2007). Based on evidence in the web of inter-firm relations in Spain and Italy, they found cluster companies to have a specific bundle of resources and a certain level of company performance. Although these studies do not investigate how this alters the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries, it shows the potential strategic contribution of policies at sub-national levels. Therefore these policies are expected to have an effect on MNCs' behaviour, like the transfer.

Finally, it can be questioned to what extent the results can be transferred to other types of companies. For this, the ICT case is referred to. ICT clearly showed that the per centage of ownership was explanatory for the transfer. Particularly, all the subsidiaries in the study were wholly owned, except for the Walloon ICT subsidiary. This ownership per centage was put forward as the main reason for the limited transfer within the Walloon ICT subsidiaries. Therefore it can be questioned to what extent, wholly owned subsidiaries are a necessary condition to talk about transfer instead of the initial 50.01 per centage that was put forward within our study. Therefore future studies should integrate more variation in ownership in order to observe the effect on the transfer.

10.4 Policy implications

Next to the theoretical and methodological implications, the study discusses three policy implications of the findings: the presence of resources, how they are used by social actors and the way the employment policies at sub-national levels relate to other policy levels. First, against the background of state reforms, it is important to note that more regionalisation does not necessarily result in more

institutional entrepreneurship or less transfer from headquarters to subsidiaries. Rather, the presence of employment policies at multiple sub-national levels is necessary in order to give the possibility to be shaped and to affect the transfer. This is in line with Almond et al., who state (2014: 240) *that only one type of MNCs select the most appropriate locations à la carte. The other type of MNCs, choose host countries and local operations where they can engage with host country institutions in order to construct a more desirable environment through continuing relationships.* So when thinking about how to reinforce subsidiaries of foreign MNCs, location advantages at one level will not necessarily suffice to affect subsidiaries' roles. Similarly, competitive employment policies at sub-national levels will not affect subsidiaries' discretion if only present at one level. Put differently, it is the compensating or reinforcing force in sub-national, company and national policies that affects institutional entrepreneurship and transfer. Therefore discussing decentralisation of policy domains on the regional government, sector or company level to strengthen subsidiaries' positions should be done simultaneously and not by debating only one level or within one policy domain.

A second implication, related to the first one, is the presence of resources for employers and employees and their representative organisations. The majority of these resources is based on parity, meaning that these resources share the bargaining space equally among social partners, emphasising their interests. However, findings have shown that employment aims can differ within one group of social actors. Specifically, disagreements between the Christian, socialist and liberal party undermined their equal bargaining position derived from resources based on parity. Similarly, conflicts between SMEs and MNCs prevented the efficient use of resources at sub-national levels. Therefore, in order to maximise the efficacy of these resources, a common strategy within trade unions or employers is recommended.

A final policy implication relates to the position of these policies at sub-national levels vis-à-vis other policy levels (national and European level). As in many OECD countries some policy domains have been transferred to sub-national governments; these levels sometimes receive exclusive responsibilities. As such the national level for some domains has no prior role anymore or cannot contest decisions made on sub-national levels. This is particularly the case for regional governments. These regional government are furthermore representatives of particular interest groups. As our findings showed, these levels all have resources where social actors can shape. As a consequence, on a higher policy level like the European level, distinct preferences of particular interest groups can be put forward. It is therefore important that all involved policies together equally represent employers' and employees' interests in order to maintain social peace. So when studying European and national levels, particularly for policy domains that have been delegated, it is important to get an insight into whether the interest of multiple groups is equally represented. Therefore employment policies at sub-national

levels vis-à-vis other policy levels need to be taken into account as they increased in relevance when studying employment.

To conclude, the present study has raised three major implications for future research, be it academic or policy oriented research: 1) the equal importance of social actors and the external environment, 2) a multilevel approach for the study of employment, and 3) the integration of variation of explanatory variables. The former first of all refers to the way policies are shaped by social actors and in turn shape social actors' behaviour. More generally, it emphasised the need to integrate the external environment where social actors are operational when studying employment. Second, the multilevel approach refers to the presence of different policies like the European, worldwide or national level next to the sub-national and company level. After all, integrating all these levels will not only contribute to a more complete understanding of the transfer. It could also explain, by using the concept of reinforcing or compensating levels, why the transfer is still influenced or why policies are shaped, even in the absence of one level. Finally, variation in explanatory variables not only refers to the integration of policies at sub-national levels in future studies on the transfer but also in additional variation in types of employment policies and practices, host and home countries and ownership percentages. By integrating these suggestions, based on the findings, future studies can elaborate on the knowledge of how policies are shaped by social actors and used to mediate the transfer of employment policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries.

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Appendix

Table 17 Overview of studies explaining the transfer

References	Methodology	Countries	Findings
Headquarters-subsidiary configuration/subsidiary roles			
Almond et al. (2005)	Case studies	US Multinationals in UK, Spain, Germany and Ireland	<p>subsidiary role: country of origin effect: dynamic process of decentralisation, ‘dedecentralisation’ and finally semi-decentralisation.</p> <p>subsidiary role: a combination of country of origin and dominance effect</p>
Birkinshaw & Morrison (1995)	Anova analysis	MNCs in 6 countries: US, UK, Canada, France, Germany and Japan	configurations between headquarters and subsidiaries are based on core competences, strategic autonomy, specialisation, performance and subsidiary interdependencies (value chain)
Ferner (2000)	Case studies	MNCs in UK and Germany	<p>existence of mutual interdependent systems of control rather than exclusive forms of control</p> <p>evolution towards less hierarchic configurations because subsidiaries interpreted the local markets</p>
Ferner et al. (2004)	Case studies	US MNCs in UK	<p>configurations are based on external environment instead of stages of internationalisation</p> <p>bargaining process: subsidiary roles are negotiated between headquarters and subsidiaries</p>
Forsgren (1990)	Case studies	22 Swedish companies	<p>hierarchy derives from control of strategic resources, but configuration is variable</p> <p>configurations is the result of management’ search for legitimacy</p>
Ghoshal & Nohria (1989)	Cluster analysis	483 US and European owned companies	<p>configurations are based on transaction costs and resources</p> <p>environmental complexity and local</p>

			resources relate to the level of centralisation, formalisation and socialisation
Ghoshal & Nohria (1993)	Cluster analysis	66 large MNCs	configurations are based on local adaptation and global integration
Malnight (2001)	Longitudinal Document analysis and semi-structured interviews	88 processes	distinguishes between 8 clusters of MNCs based on the most important level (domestic, regional, transnational and global) and on the level of product differentiation clusters are linked with particular levels of decision-making, strategic position, communication and corporate culture
McGraw (2004)	Semi-structured interviews	Foreign MNCs in Australia	configuration is explained by the environment, the competences elsewhere in the network and social actors
Parry et al. (2008)	Survey	540 MNCs	institutional distance explains subsidiary roles institutional distance also influences manoeuvre for social actors in determining subsidiary roles
Rugman et al. (2011)	Case studies		for production, sales, innovation and administrative support the headquarters-subsidiary configuration changed for all activities after integrating the supra-national dimension
Discretion, centralisation and control			
Almond et al. (2005)	Case studies	US Multinationals in UK, Spain, Germany and Ireland	industrial relations: country of origin effect pay and performance management: country of origin effect, for German MNCs also country of origin effect for training policies

Bélanger et al. (2013)	Survey	208 foreign (164) and domestic (44) owned MNCs in Canada	stronger resources means higher discretion resources: internal management capabilities (relations with employees, representing capability and mandates) and embeddedness (network with clients/suppliers, competitive position in the value chain) country of origin: US owned MNCs have less discretion
Belizon et al. (2014)	survey	213 Irish MNCs 242 Spanish MNCs	evidence for home and host country effect, influence of mode of entry and new investments and presence of expats on the transfer no influence of size, sector and age
Edwards et al. (2007)	Case study	American MNCs	home and host country institutions shape the transfer of employment policies but at the same time these institutions are the result of a contest between social actors within MNCs
Edwards et al. (2013)	Survey	833 foreign owned MNCs in Canada, Ireland, Spain and UK	control is not determined by the subsidiary position within the network skill level of the work force is influential country of origin influences the type of control organisational structures are related to output control
Fenton-O'Greevy, Gooderham, and Nordhaug (2008)	Regression analysis	441 US MNCs in Norway, Denmark, Germany, UK, Ireland and Australia	centralisation is determined by a combination of country of origin effect, host country effect and unionisation at the subsidiary level
Ferner, & Quintanilla (1998)	Case studies	US and UK MNCs in Germany	support for country of origin effect German way of internationalisation

Ferner et al. (2004)	Case studies	UK US Germany and Spain	inconsistencies in employment policies increases discretion country of origin: subsidiaries of US MNCs have less discretion subsidiaries as local interpreters of local environment enhances discretion
Ferner et al. (2005)	Case studies	US MNCs in UK	different outcomes for discretion and control, a combination of product and labour-market pressures for diversity in the home and host countries and company specific characteristics
Ferner et al. (2012)	Survey	258 MNCs	for IR and HRM: country of origin and standardisation of products are influential HRM: influence of intermediate structures and nature of HR IR: influence of sector
Innes & Morris (1995)	Descriptive statistics	US, Japanese and German MNCs in Wales	no evidence for country of origin effect; only certain aspects are being transferred indication for importance of sub-institutional dimension: Japanese MNCs recognise unions in Wales (presence of regional development agencies) more than in the rest of the UK
Marginson et al. (2010)	Survey	UK and foreign (US, Japanese, German, Swedish and French) MNCs in UK	partially confirmation of country of origin effect on the choice of employee representation/consultative voice variation between European-owned MNCs intra-firm variation of the same country because of methods of growth and sector
Muller (1998)	Case studies	UK, US and German MNCs in Germany	home country effect: US companies try harder to avoid IR institutions

			<p>compared to UK and German MNCs, space for manoeuvre more used by US companies</p> <p>bigger MNCs comply more with host country settings</p>
McDonald et al. (2003)	Survey	40 German MNCs and 67 UK MNCs in UK	<p>no country of origin effect</p> <p>a German version of Anglosaxation: interaction between home country effect, the host country effect and best practices</p> <p>level of discretion and control depends on subsidiary mandate</p>
Pulignano (2006)	Case studies	US MNCs in Italy and UK	<p>pay and reward systems: decentralisation for UK MNCs, mixed evidence for Italy</p> <p>training and recruitment: mixed evidence for both UK MNCs and Italian MNCs</p> <p>trade unions and collective bargaining: mixed evidence for both UK MNCs and Italian MNCs</p>
Rosenzweig & Nohria (1994)	Survey	249 affiliates in US of foreign MNCs	<p>discretion is explained by the method of founding, the local resources, the presence of expats, the communication with the headquarters and the nature of the employment policy or practice</p>
Quintanilla & Ferner (2003)	Case studies	4 MNCs in Spain	<p>effect of country of origin for HR and IR</p> <p>effect of internal management capabilities</p> <p>effect of subsidiary resources</p> <p>the host country influences possibilities for social actors to influence control and discretion</p>
Quintanilla et al. (2008)	Case studies	4 US MNCs in Spain	<p>industrial relations: country of origin</p> <p>payment systems: centralisation</p>

			<p>though some subsidiaries have arrangement for fringe benefits at local level, depending on bargaining space of the subsidiary</p> <p>employment strategies: centralised but adapted to the local level</p>
Saka (2002)	Case studies	Japanese subsidiaries in the UK	<p>home country, host country, company characteristics and the nature of the work organisation influence the extent to which the work organisation of the head office is transferred</p> <p>comparison between the case studies showed an indication for considering the regional institutional systems within UK</p>
Tayeb (1998)	Case studies	US MNCs in Scotland	<p>nature of policy or practice is detrimental</p> <p>easy transfer: recruitment, training pay and performance</p> <p>no easy transfer: communication and IR- need help from local trade unions</p>
Tüselmann et al. (2002)	Survey	60 German MNCs in UK	complementary HR and ER schemes
Tüselmann et al. (2008)	Survey	US and UK owned MNCs in UK	discretion and control are explained by the level of internationalisation of the sector and the nature of internalisation of the sector

Table 18 Overview of studies using secondary datasets

References	Research Focus	Population listing
Björkman et al. (2008)	the degree to which HR practices are standardised and/or localised	lists provided by embassies and business councils
Du et al. (2011)	foreign directors in active boards	Belfirst
Guest & Hoque (1996)	foreign ownership influence on HR practices	lists provided by embassies, regional development agencies and trade associations
Huang (2000)	parent-company culture influence on HR practices in overseas subsidiaries	lists retrieved from the Council of Investment, Ministry of Economic Affairs of Taiwan
Kim & Gray (2005)	environmental and firm-specific variables explaining HR practices	Australian Stock Exchange
McDonald et al. (2003)	country of origin and employment relations	listing of the German-British Chamber of Industry and Commerce and Office for National Statistics
Morris et al. (2009)	internal company processes and HR replication	2004 Fortune Listing
Park et al. (2003)	relationship between HR and firm performance	Japanese and American Chambers of Commerce listings
Tungli & Peiperl (2009)	convergence and divergence trends in expatriation practices	the Global 1000, Amadeus, Germany's top 500, Press Reference 1996
Wood & Fenton-O'Greevy (2005)	institutional settings and employee voice and representation	Financial Times top 100
Yamao et al.(2009)	role of subsidiaries' practices for development of knowledge stocks	USA/Australia Trade Directory 2006 (American Chamber of Commerce), German Subsidiary Companies in Australia 2005/2006 (German-Australian Chamber of Industry and Commerce, 2005) Japanese Overseas Investment Country (Country Edition)

Table 19 Topic guide company level

Topic guide interviews Employment policies and practices in multinationals
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First of all I want to thank you for the collaboration on the project of multinationals. During this interview, two blocks of questions will be asked. I will start with some general questions on the multinational company and its headquarters in country x. Then I will come to questions related to this subsidiary

1. Background information

- a. Can you describe your function within the company
 - i. For how many years you have been working within this company
 - ii. Did you always worked in this subsidiary
 - iii. Are you operational on other levels in the company
- b. Can you describe the companies' main activity
- c. In which countries is the company operational
- d. How the company has been evolving over time. Can you give a short description of the history
- e. How is the company doing these days, for the last year

2. HR function

- a. How does the company organise its employment around the world
 - i. Is there a more centralised or decentralised approach
 - ii. Is the approach similar for all the subsidiaries
 - iii. Are there mechanisms used to maintain contact between the headquarters and the subsidiaries

3. Information on the subsidiary

- a. Can you describe the main activity of the subsidiary
- b. Can you describe the history of the subsidiary (mergers etc.).
- c. Why this subsidiary has been located in Belgium
- d. Why this subsidiary has been located in region x (Flanders, Brussels or Walloon region)
- e. Can you describe the industry in which the subsidiary is operational
- f. Can you describe the relation between unions and management within this industry
- g. Can you describe how the subsidiary operates in the local environment
 - i. Has the subsidiary contact with other local firms (local suppliers?)
 - ii. Is the subsidiary member of (a) representative organisation(s)
- iii. Has the subsidiary a powerful position in terms of competition compared to other local companies
- iv. Can you describe contacts with other local firms, local organisations or universities

- h. Can you describe employee representation at the subsidiary level
- i. How does management and unions operate within the subsidiary
- j. Can you describe the largest occupational group within the subsidiary
 - i. Can you describe the composition of LOG
 - ii. Can you described LOGs'importance for the subsidiary

The following questions concern the two employment practices pay and training. All the following questions concerns the largest occupational group within the subsidiary

4. Information on pay policies

- a. Can you describe the pay policy for the largest occupational group
- b. Can you describe the process of creation and implementation of this policy
(based on answers in previous section)
 - i. What is the role of the headquarters
 - ii. What is the role of the local management
 - iii. What is the role of the unions
 - iv. What is the role of the subsidiaries' position in the network of MNCs' subsidiaries
 - v. What is the role of the local context
 - vi. Did the subsidiary benefit from local or regional initiatives
 - vii. What is the role of representative organisations
 - viii. What is the role of power of the MNC

5. Information on training

- a. Can you describe the training policy for the largest occupational group
- b. Can you describe the process of creation and implementation of this policy
(based on answers in previous section)
 - i. What is the role of the headquarters
 - ii. What is the role of the local management
 - iii. What is the role of the unions
 - iv. What is the role of the subsidiaries' position in the network of MNCs'subsidiaries
 - v. What is the role of the local context
 - vi. Did the subsidiary benefit from local or regional initiatives
 - vii. What is the role of representative organisations
 - viii. What is the role of power of MNC

6. Institutional entrepreneurship

- a. Can you describe the employment policies at sub-national levels
- b. How were these policies constructed

- i. What is the role of MNC
- ii. What is the role of regional development agencies
- iii. What is the role of the employers' federations
- iv. What is the role of the trade unions

Table 20 Topic guide sector level

Topic guide Sector level

- 1) Profile interviewee:
 - a) What is the job of the interviewee
 - b) What is the level he/she is working on
 - c) Seniority
- 2) Composition of the sector
 - a) How does the sector look like (Companies: what is the average size, international character, geographical spread, proportion SME-MNC)
 - b) Can you describe the social actors (relation between trade unions and employers on the sector level and within the companies)
- 3) Can you give a description of policies and services on the sector level
 - a) Is there a training centre-future plans
 - b) Is there a social fund: pensions fund
 - c) Is there a sector covenant:
 - i) Content of the covenant
 - ii) Elaboration in the future or planning to have one in the near future
- 4) How have the policies and instruments been set up
 - a) Bottom or top down
 - b) What is the role of social actors
 - c) What is the role of specific companies
- 5) Collaboration with other policies at sub-national levels
 - a) Is there collaboration with regional development agencies
 - b) Is there any collaboration across sectors
 - c) Is there any collaboration with private companies

Tabel 21 Index

Theme	Sub themes	Description of themes
Profile of the respondent		
	PROF_FUNC	whether the respondent has an HR function, a general management function or is a union representative
	PROF_SEN	seniority, the number of years operational in the company
	PROF_ORG	the level on which the respondent is operational (juridical sense)
	PROF_EXP	whether the respondent has experience or not
Background MNC	BMNC_C	the country in which the head office is located
	BMNC_HIS	how the company has been evolving over time
	BMNC_ECO	describes how the company is doing these days compared to its competitors
	BMNC_ACT	main activity of the MNC
	BMNC_MARK	the market in which the MNC is operational
	BMNC_REG	the company is subjected to regulation regarding the main activity, on a national level
	BMNC_CL	nature of clients of MNC (local, international)
	BMNC_STR	the way how the business is organised throughout the world (based on country , based on business division)
	BMNC_APP	the way the headquarters approaches the subsidiaries (centralised/decentralised)
	BMNC_NAME	name of the company
	BMNC_CUL	the values emphasised by the multinational company
	BMNC_CONTACT	which mechanisms are used to install

		contact between headquarters and subsidiaries
Background Subsidiary	BSUB_LOC	the region in which the subsidiary is located
	BSUB_CUL	the values emphasised by the subsidiary
	BSUB_REGULATION	regulation regarding the main activity/Belgian law, is the subsidiary subjected to regional legislation/regulation
	BSUB_HIS	the history of the company, how the subsidiary has been evolved through the time
	BSUB_ECO	describes how the company is doing these days compared to its competitors
	BSUB-MARK	describes the market in which the subsidiary is operational
	BSUB_NET	how the company is doing within the network of MNCs' subsidiaries
	BSUB_MGT	the profile of the local management, how does the local management look like
	BSUB_MGTTU	relation between management and trade unions (conflictual/ cooperative)
	BSUB_TU	the per centage of unionised employees
	BSUB_TUMUT	mutual relations between trade unions within the subsidiary or within the company in Belgium
	BSUB_REGTR	use of regional training initiatives on the subsidiary level (VDAB, FOREM, ACTIRIS)
	BSUB_SECTR	use of sector training institutes on the subsidiary level
	BSUB_SECREW	is there a sector agreement on remuneration instruments that is used
	BSUB_PRIV	collaboration with private partners for training or pay
	BSUB_EMP	number of employees
	BSUB_NAME	name of subsidiary

	BSUB_OWN	is the subsidiary completely or partially owned (number of shares owned by the headquarters)
	BSUB_WORK	composition of the workforce (mainly blue -or white-collar workers)
	BSUB_CONT	contact with other companies
	BSUB_ACT	the main activity of the subsidiary
	BSUB_CL	the profile of the clients
	BSUB_STR	structure of the company in Belgium (is this based on regions and/or on business divisions)
	BSUB_ENV	contact with the local environment (other than companies)
Sector	SECTOR_MGTTU	the way employers and employees and their representative organisations cooperate and communicate at the sector level
	SECTOR_VISTR	vision on training
	SECTOR_VISREW	vision on rewarding
	SECTOR_CENTR	the use /existence of training centres within the sector
	SECTOR_DESCRIP	the profile of the sector (how do the members look like, size, location)
	SECTOR_COLGOV	whether the sector works together with government structures or other institutes
	SECTOR_MGMTUT	the mutual relation between employers
	SECTOR_STADIUMTRA	the stage of the sector regarding training (initial phase or already developed training institute)
	SECTOR_TUMUT	the relation between employees representatives
	SECTOR_PAY	presence of additional remuneration instruments in collective agreements
Local embeddedness	LOCAL_EMPL	is the company member of employers' organisation
	LOCAL_INFMTGT	does the company attend informal

		networks of local managers
	LOCAL_INFTU	do trade unions representatives attend informal network of union representatives
HR function	HR_STRATMNC	how HR and strategy are linked within MNC
	HR_MGT	influence of local management on decisions regarding HR practices
	HR_HOME	country of origin effect on decisions regarding the HR function (country in which the headquarters is located)
	HR_HOST	host country effect on decisions regarding the HR function (the influence of regulatory Belgian framework)
	HR_TU	influence of trade unions on decisions regarding the HR function
	HR_OWN	influence of the ownership structure on decisions regarding the HR function
	HR_MARKET	influence of the market in which the company is operational on decisions regarding the HR function
	HR_STRATBEL	how HR and strategy are linked
	HR_SHSERV	is the company making use of shared services
	HR_PROF	the way the HR function is professionally organised
	HR_Contact	the contact mechanisms used to exchange within the HR department
	HR_ORGSTR	influence of organisational structure on HR
	HR_STR	the way the HR department is organised
	HR_REG	influence of regulation on HR
	HR_SIM	is the structure of HR in the subsidiary a copy of HR in multinational
	HR_NUMBER	number of HR managers in Belgium
Organisational structure in Belgium	ORGSTR_NAT	how does the company look like in Belgium
	ORGST_MARKET	influence of the market in which the

		company is operational on the way the company is organised in Belgium
	ORGSTR_SIM	is the MNC structure worldwide reflected in the structure in Belgium
	ORGSTR-HOST	host country effect on organisational structure
	ORGSTR_REG	effect of regional regulation on the organisation structure
	ORGSTR_LOC	effect of local environment on the organisational structure
	ORGSTR_ECO	effect of economic position on the organisational structure
The transfer of training policy	TRATR_HOME	country of origin effect on the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_TRANSFER	description of the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_HOST	host country effect on the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_REG	effect of the regional government on the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_SECTOR	effect of the sector on the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_LOCAL	effect of the local environment on the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_TU	effect of trade unions on the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_NET	effect of the role taken up by the subsidiary within the network of subsidiaries on the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_MARK	effect of the market in which the company is operational on the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_LOCMGT	effect of local management on the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_PRIV	the effect of the use of private institutions

		for training on the transfer of training policy
	TRATR_VISION	description of vision on training
The transfer of pay policy	TRAPAY_HOME	country of origin effect on the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_HOST	host country effect on the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_TRANSFER	description of the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_NET	effect of the role taken up by the subsidiary within the network of subsidiaries on the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_HIS	effect of history of the company on the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_MARK	effect of market in which they are operational on the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_LOCMGT	effect of local management on the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_ORGSTR	effect of organisational structure on the transfer of pay policy
	PAY_DESCR	description of pay policy
	TRAPAY_REG	effect of regional government on the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_PRIV	whether the use of private institutions affect the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_SECTOR	sector effect on the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_LOCAL	effect of local initiatives on the transfer of pay policy
	TRAPAY_TU	effect of trade unions on the transfer of pay policy
Institutional Entrepreneurship	INSTENT_REG	interaction between actors and institutions on the regional level
	INSTENT_INTERFIRM	interaction between actors and institutions on the inter-firm level
	INSTENT_COMP	interaction between actors and institutions on the company level

Table 22 Codebook

Code	Sub code	Description of Code
Profile interviewee		
Company Profile	ECONOMIC SITUATION_CP	how does the market look like, are there many competitors
	SOCIAL ACTORS_CP	how do trade unions and employers/ managers behave and how is their relation
	REGULATION_CP	different types of regulation the company is subjected to. This can be the European, Belgian, regional and local level
	CONTACT_CP	contact with other companies or organisations within the local environment
	RELATION WITH HEADQUARTERS_CP	the relation between headquarters and subsidiaries in general (so broader than HR management), strong control from headquarters or are subsidiaries left autonomous
	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/CONTEXT_CP	country of origin
	STRUCTURE_CP	how does the structure of the MNC look like, presence of business divisions, regional headquarters or national subsidiaries
	HISTORICAL EVOLUTION_CP	evolution of the MNC, its origin and its composition (greenfield investments or acquired SMEs), main activity
	CULTURE_CP	main values of the company worldwide
	WORKFORCE COMPOSITION_CP	what is the largest occupational

		group within the company worldwide or within the divisions
HR	DESCRIPTION_HR	how does the HR policy looks like, uniform policy across the subsidiaries, are the values reflected in employment practices, is it centralised or decentralised
	SOCIAL ACTORS_HR	influence of social actors
	REGULATION_HR	influence of regional, national or sub-national regulation on the HR function
	ECONOMIC FACTORS_HR	influence of the competitive position on the HR function
	ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE_HR	similarities between organisational structure and the HR structure
Organisational structure	SOCIAL ACTORS_OS	influence of social actors on the organisational structure
	REGULATION_OS	influence of regional, national or sub-national regulation on the organisational structure
	ECONOMIC FACTORS_OS	influence of the competitive position on the organisational structure
Training policy	DESCRIPTION_TP	how does the training policy look like: uniform training program, shared services, frequency of training sessions, participants , use of sector services or external organisations
	SOCIAL ACTORS_TP	influence of trade unions and employers' federations in the construction of the training

		policies
	REGULATION_TP	influence of regional, national or sub-national regulation (sector) on training policies
	ECONOMIC FACTORS_TP	influence of the market on the need to set up a training policy
Pay policy	DESCRIPTION_PAY	how does the pay policy looks like
	SOCIAL ACTORS_PAY	influence of trade unions and employers' federations
	REGULATION_PAY	influence of regional, national or sub-national regulation (sector) on pay policies
	ECONOMIC FACTORS_PAY	influence of the market on the need to set up a pay policy
Sector	SOCIAL ACTORS_SEC	the relation between trade unions and employers on the sector level
	VISION ON TRAINING_SEC	what is the sector perspective on training has the sector its own services
	VISION ON REWARDING_SEC	presence of collective services like social fund/pension fund
	COMPOSITION_SEC	how does the sector looks like, key characteristics like SME-MNCs and geographical spread
	GOVERNMENT_SEC	agreement between sector and regional governments like a sector covenant or obligatory training sessions
Institutional entrepreneurship	REGIONAL GOVERNEMENT_IP	how and to what extent social actors try to shape decisions on the level of the regional governments in accordance with their aims and plans
	SECTOR LEVEL_IP	how and to what extent social

		actors try to shape decisions on the sector level in accordance with their aims and plans
	WEB OF INTER-FIRM RELATIONS LEVEL_IP	how and to what extent social actors try to shape decisions on the level of web of inter-firm relations in accordance with their aims and plans
	COMPANY LEVEL_IP	how and to what extent social actors try to shape decisions on the company level in accordance with their aims and plans

Summary

The thesis has studied the role of employment policies at sub-national levels as possible explanations for different ways in which multinational companies produce and disseminate their employment policies and practices to their subsidiaries. The study has hereby focused on initiatives of regional governments, sectors and webs of inter-firm relations like continuous vocational training or pension funds. It was hereby assumed that these sub-national levels influence the decision-making roles of headquarters and subsidiaries with regard to employment policies and practices. Based on the literature on the topic, different dimensions of the transfer were distinguished: degree of control, centralisation, discretion and different configurations between subsidiaries and headquarters. Policies at sub-national level were not seen separately from social actors (employers, employees and their representatives) within multinationals. Rather, social actors were considered as "co-constructors" of sub-national levels. In doing so the thesis integrated the growing demand within studies on the transfer in MNCs to integrate within country variation and the role of social actors.

For this, the thesis has focused on training and pay policies and practices in MNCs' subsidiaries. Not only the subsidiaries' specific policies were of interest, but also policies at sub-national levels through which training and pay policies were shaped, like collective agreements or employment services provided by regional governments. To gain an insight into the various dimensions, 4 multinationals with several subsidiaries in Belgium were studied. Within those subsidiaries (HR) managers and trade union delegates were interviewed. Managers at higher organisational levels (regional or global headquarters) and sector representatives were also questioned. To get a comprehensive picture the study did also rely on secondary sources like collective agreements, policy documents, newspaper articles and company presentations.

Based on the analysis of the interviews and secondary sources, the presence of more than one sub-national policy shows to be one of the crucial factors in explaining how these initiatives are formed and how the transfer of employment policies and practices takes place. Moreover, the way in which sub-national initiatives meet the objective of social actors is explanatory. Specifically, the results have shown that social actors, unions, managers and employers' federations at the level of the subsidiary only engage in sub-national policies when multiple sources are available and if a competitive policy is the result. The sources to engage originate from the way the relationship between social actors and sub-national policies has evolved over time. As such, a continuous relationship between policy instruments and actors is observed. In addition, the presence of several policies at sub-national levels also influenced the transfer of training and pay policies, especially when these initiatives affect the competitive position of the multinational. This resulted in more

decision making or other competences for the subsidiary, because national subsidiaries ensure access to these initiatives.

Based on the results, it is recommended that future research should integrate policies at sub-national levels and the role of social actors both in academic and policy research. Not only will this give an insight into the extent to which different social actors can express their interests, it will make the relevance of a particular policy or domain clear as well. The first implication is important, as this will allow examination of whether bodies based on parity achieve their objectives in the context of social peace. The second implication will contribute to the understanding of the position of the national level, i.e. whether this level remains the most important policy level or not.

Samenvatting

Het doctoraat heeft de rol van sub-nationale regelgeving en beleidsinitiatieven bestudeerd als mogelijke verklaringen voor de verschillende manieren waarop multinationals hun personeelsbeleid opstellen en verspreiden in dochterondernemingen. Het heeft zich hierbij specifiek gericht op initiatieven van regionale overheden, sectoren en clusters van bedrijven zoals voortgezette opleiding of pensioenfondsen die de relatieve positie van hoofdkantoor en dochteronderneming inzake personeelsbeleid mee vormgeven. Op basis van de literatuur werd hiervoor een onderscheid gemaakt tussen verschillende dimensies voor het transferen van personeelsbeleid namelijk de mate van controle, centralisatie en beslissingsbevoegdheid en verschillende configuraties tussen dochterondernemingen en eenzelfde hoofdkantoor. Die sub-nationale regelgeving en beleidsinitiatieven werden bovendien niet gezien als losstaand van sociale actoren (werknemers, werkgevers en hun vertegenwoordigers) binnen multinationals. Die sociale actoren werden beschouwd als ‘mede-constructeurs’ van die sub-nationale niveaus. Met deze studie komt het doctoraat tegemoet aan een toenemende vraag binnen de studies in MNCs voor de integratie van variatie binnen een land en de rol van sociale actoren.

Concreet richtte het onderzoek zich op opleidings –en verloningsbeleid. Dus niet enkel het beleid op ondernemingsniveau vormde het onderwerp van studie, ook sub-nationale initiatieven die het opleidings-en verloningsbeleid mee vormgaven zoals sectorale trainingscentra, collectieve arbeidsovereenkomsten of arbeidsbemiddeling voorzien door regionale overheden. Om inzicht te krijgen in de verschillende dimensies werden hiervoor 4 multinationale ondernemingen onderzocht met verschillende dochterondernemingen in België. Binnen die dochterondernemingen werden (HR) managers en vakbondsafgevaardigden bevroegd. Ook managers op hogere organisatorische niveaus (regional of globaal hoofdkantoor) als sectorafgevaardigden werden geïnterviewd. Om een allesomvattender beeld te krijgen deed de studie ook een beroep op secundaire bronnen zoals collectieve arbeidsovereenkomsten, beleidsdocumenten, krantenartikels en bedrijfspresentaties.

Op basis van de analyse van de interviews en de secundaire bronnen blijkt dat de aanwezigheid van meer dan 1 sub-nationaal beleid de eerste cruciale factor is in het verklaren van de manier waarop die initiatieven gevormd worden en de verspreiding van het opleidingsbeleid en verloningsbeleid verklaren. Daarenboven is de manier waarop die sub-nationale initiatieven tegemoet komen aan de doelstelling van sociale actoren verklarend. Concreet toonden de resultaten aan dat sociale actoren, vakbonden, managers en werkgeversfederaties op het niveau van de dochteronderneming enkel zich engageren om die sub-nationale initiatieven mee vorm te geven als er meerdere bronnen aanwezig zijn om dit te doen en als dit een

competitief beleid tot gevolg heeft. De bronnen om zich te engageren vloeien voort uit de manier waarop de relatie tussen sociale actoren en die sub-nationale beleidsinstrumenten evolueerde doorheen de tijd. Alsdusdanig is er een continue relatie gevonden tussen beleidinstrumenten en actoren. Daarnaast had de aanwezigheid van verschillende sub-nationale initiatieven ook een invloed op de verspreiding van opleidings- en verloningsbeleid, zeker wanneer die initiatieven de competitieve positie van de multinational globaal beïnvloedden. Dit resulteerde in meer beslissingsbevoegdheid of andere toegewezen competenties voor de dochteronderneming omdat de nationale dochterondernemingen de toegang tot die initiatieven verzekerde.

Op basis van de resultaten is het dus aan te raden dat toekomstig onderzoek de verschillende mogelijke beleidsdomeinen en de rol van sociale actoren actief integreert in zowel academisch als beleidsmatig onderzoek. Niet enkel zal hiermee inzicht gegeven worden in de mate waarin verschillende sociale actoren hun interesses kunnen kenbaar maken, ook de relevantie van een bepaald beleidsniveau of domein zal hiermee duidelijker worden. De eerste implicatie is belangrijk gezien hierdoor nagegaan kan worden of verschillende paritair samengestelde organen hun doelstelling bereiken in het kader van sociale vrede. De tweede implicatie zorgt ervoor dat inzicht wordt verworven in welke mate het nationale niveau niet langer het belangrijkste beleidsniveau is.

Résumé

La thèse a étudié le rôle des réglementations et initiatives politiques infranationales comme autant d'explications possibles aux différentes manières dont les entreprises multinationales définissent et diffusent au sein de leurs filiales leur politique en matière de personnel. Spécifiquement, l'étude s'est intéressée aux initiatives développées par les gouvernements régionaux, les secteurs d'activités et les groupements d'entreprises - telles que la formation continue ou les fonds de pension – qui influencent la position relative tant du siège central que de la filiale en matière de politique du personnel. Se basant sur la littérature, l'étude distingue à cet effet différentes dimensions relatives à la transposition de la politique du personnel, à savoir le degré de contrôle, de centralisation, et de pouvoir décisionnel, ainsi que les différentes configurations entre les filiales et le siège central. En outre, ces réglementations et initiatives politiques n'ont pas été étudiées comme étant découplées des acteurs sociaux (employeurs, salariés et leurs représentants) au sein des multinationales. Au contraire, ces acteurs sociaux ont été considérés comme des «co-constructeurs» de ces niveaux infranationaux. Ce faisant, ce doctorat rencontre la demande croissante au sein des études sur les multinationales visant à intégrer la question de la variation au sein d'un même pays et le rôle des acteurs sociaux.

La recherche s'est concrètement intéressée aux politiques de rémunération et de formation. Ainsi, non seulement la politique au niveau de l'entreprise a fait l'objet de l'étude, mais aussi les initiatives infranationales qui ont façonné les politiques de rémunération et de formation, tels que les centres de formation sectoriels, les conventions collectives ou encore la concertation sociale organisée par les entités régionales. Pour mieux comprendre les différentes dimensions, quatre multinationales ayant plusieurs filiales en Belgique ont été étudiées. Au sein de ces filiales, des managers (RH) et délégués syndicaux ont été interrogés, ainsi que des managers à des niveaux plus élevés de l'organisation (établissement régionaux et siège central) et des représentants du secteur. Afin d'obtenir une image plus complète, l'étude a aussi intégré des sources secondaires telles que les conventions collectives de travail, les documents décrivant la politique poursuivie, des articles de journaux et des présentations d'entreprise.

Sur base de l'analyse des entretiens et des sources secondaires, il apparaît que la présence de plus d'une politique infranationale soit le premier facteur crucial pour expliquer la manière dont ces initiatives sont formées, et la transposition de la politique de formation et de rémunération. En outre, la manière dont les initiatives infranationales rencontrent l'objectif poursuivis par les acteurs sociaux constitue un second facteur explicatif. Concrètement, les résultats ont montré que les acteurs sociaux, les syndicats, les managers et la fédération des employeurs au niveau de la filiale ne participent au façonnement de ces initiatives infranationales que si plusieurs sources sont disponibles pour y parvenir, et que cela débouche sur une

politique compétitive. Les sources de cet engagement découlent de la manière dont la relation entre les acteurs sociaux et ces instruments de politique infranationale ont évolué dans le temps. De ce fait il existe une relation continue entre instruments de politique et acteurs. De plus, la présence de plusieurs initiatives infranationales a également un impact sur la diffusion des politiques de formation et de rémunération, en particulier lorsque ces initiatives affectent globalement la position concurrentielle de la multinationale. Cela s'est traduit par un pouvoir discrétionnaire plus important ou par la délégation de nouvelles compétences à la filiale étant donné que les filiales nationales garantissent l'accès à ces initiatives.

Ces résultats permettent de recommander aux recherches futures, soient-elles à caractère académique ou appliqué, d'intégrer activement les différents domaines politiques et le rôle des acteurs sociaux. Cela permettra non seulement d'obtenir un meilleur aperçu de la manière dont les différents acteurs sociaux peuvent exprimer leurs intérêts, mais rendra aussi plus clairement compte de la pertinence d'une politique ou d'un domaine particulier. La première implication est importante car elle permettra de vérifier si les différents organes de concertation sociale ont atteint leurs objectifs dans le cadre de la paix sociale. La deuxième implication permettra d'acquérir une vue sur le degré de pertinence d'une politique au niveau national.

DOCTORATEN IN DE SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN EN DOCTORATEN IN DE SOCIALE EN CULTURELE ANTROPOLOGIE

I. REEKS VAN DOCTORATEN IN DE SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN ⁽¹⁾

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